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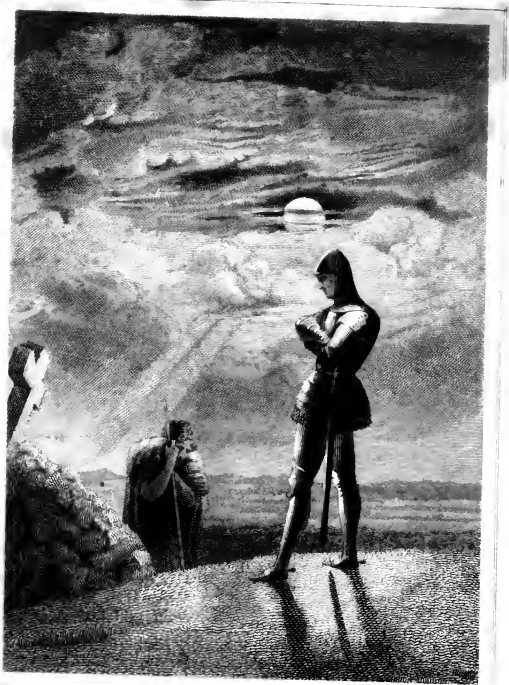

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GOLDEN VIOLET.

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THE

POETICAL WORKS

OF

LETITIA ELIZABETH LANDON.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

A NEW EDITION.

VOLUME III.

THE GOLDEN VIOLET.

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TO

THE REV. JAMES LANDON,

RECTOR OF ABERFORD AND AMESTRY.

My dear Uncle,

I inscribe to you this volume, the greater part of which was written under your affectionate roof, during the two pleasant seasons I have passed with you. To have it deemed worthy of your critical judgment, and your more partial approval, would indeed be the pride and pleasure of

Your gratefully attached

L. E. L.

December, 1826.

INTRODUCTION.

THE title of the Golden Violet is taken from the Festival alluded to in the close of the Troubadour. There are various accounts of the origin of this metrical competition: the one from which my idea was principally taken is that mentioned by Warton.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

THE GOLDEN VIOLET..... 1

ERINNA..... 241

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

THE CONISTON CURSE..... 271

THE OMEN..... 283

ONE DAY..... 291

LOVE'S LAST LESSON..... 298

NOTES..... 307

THE GOLDEN VIOLET.

To-MORROW, to-morrow, thou loveliest May,
To-morrow will rise up thy first-born day;
Bride of the Summer, Child of the Spring,
To-morrow the year will its favourite bring:
The roses will know thee, and fling back their vest,
While the nightingale sings him to sleep on their breast;
The blossoms, in welcomes, will open to meet
On the light boughs thy breath, in the soft grass thy feet.
To-morrow the dew will have virtue to shed
O'er the cheek of the maiden* its loveliest red;

* Gathering the May dew.

To-morrow a glory will brighten the earth,
While the spirit of beauty rejoicing has birth.

Farewell to thee, April, a gentle farewell,
Thou hast saved the young rose in its emerald cell;
Sweet nurse, thou hast mingled thy sunshine and showers,
Like kisses and tears, on thy children the flowers.
As a hope, when fulfill'd, to sweet memory turns,
We shall think of thy clouds as the odorous urns,
Whence colour, and freshness, and fragrance were wept;
We shall think of thy rainbows, their promise is kept.
There is not a cloud on the morning's blue way,
And the daylight is breaking, the first of the May.

And never yet hath morning light
Lovelier vision brought to sight,
Or lovelier driven away from dreams,
—And lovely that which only seems;—
The garden, that beneath it lay,
From flower and fountain sent the ray
Reflected, till all round seem'd blent
Into one sunny element.

There in the midst rose marble halls,
Wreathed pillars upheld the walls;
A fairy castle, not of those
Made for storm, and made for foes,
But telling of a gentler time,
A lady's rule, a summer clime.
And all spoke joyousness, for there
Thronged the gay, the young, the fair,—

It was now their meeting hour,—
They scatter'd round through grove and bower.
Many a high-born beauty made
Her seat beneath the chestnut shade;
While, like her shadow hovering near,
Came her dark-eyed cavalier,
Bidding the rose fade by her cheek,
To hint of what he dared not speak.
And others wandered with the lute,
In such a scene could it be mute?
While from its winged sweetness came,
The echo of some treasured name.
And many a grot with laughter rung,
As gathered there, these gay and young
Flung airy jests like arrows round,
That hit the mark but to rebound.

With graceful welcome smiled on all,
The lady of the festival
Wander'd amid her guests; at last,
Many a courtly greeting past,
She stray'd into a little grove,
With cypress branches roofed above;
Beneath the path was scarcely seen,—
Alike the walk and margent green.
So dim it was, each precious stone
The countess wore a meteor shone.
Yet on she went, for nought her heart
In the glad revellings took part:
Too tender and too sad to share
In sportive mirth, in pageant glare;
Dearer to her was the first breath,
When morning shakes her early wreath,

And joys in the young smiles of day,
Albeit they steal her pearls away:
Dearer to her the last pale light
That lingers on the brow of night,
As if unwilling to be gone,
And abdicate its lovely throne:
Dearer to her were these than all
Than ever shone in lighted hall.

The young, the gay, be they allow'd
One moment's pleasaunce in the crowd;
The dance, the odours, song, and bloom,
Those soft spells of the banquet room:
They last not, but the ear, the eye,
Catch the check'd frown—the hidden sigh,
Which pierce too soon the shining mask,
And prove delight may be a task.

One of those glowing spots that take
The sunbeams prisoners, and make
A glory of their own delight,
Below all clear, above all bright.
And every bank was fair; but one
Most shelter'd from the wind and sun
Seem'd like a favourite: the rest
Bared to the open sky their breast;
But this was resting in the shade
By two old patriarch chestnuts made,
Whose aged trunks peep'd grey and bare
Spite of the clustering ivy's care,
Which had spread over all its wreath,
The boughs above, the ground beneath;—
Oft told and true similitude
For moralist in pensive mood,

To mark the green leaves' glad outside,
Then search what wither'd boughs they hide.
And here the countess took her seat
Beneath the chestnut, shelter meet
For one whose presence might beseem
The spirit of the shade and stream;
As now she lean'd with upraised head,
And white veil o'er her bosom spread,
Hiding the gems and chains of gold
Which too much of rank's baubles told;
Leaving her only with the power
Of nature in its loveliest hour,
When to its musing look is given
The influence of its native heaven.
Her cheek was pale, the hue of thought,
Like image by the sculptor sought

For some sweet saint, some muse on whom
Beauty has shed all but her bloom,
As if it would have nought declare
The strife and stain of clay were there.
Braided Madonna-like, the wave
Of the black hair a lustre gave
To the clear forehead, whose pure snow
Was even as an angel's brow:
While there was in her gentler eye
The touch of human sympathy,—
That mournful tenderness which still
In grief and joy, in good and ill,
Lingers with woman through life's void,
Sadden'd, subdued, but not destroy'd.

And gazed the countess on the lake,
Loving it for its beauty's sake;

Wander'd her look round, till its sight
Became itself blent with the light;
Till, as it sought for rest, her eye
Now fell upon a green mound nigh.
With ivy hung and moss o'ergrown,
Beside it stood a broken stone,
And on it was a single flower,
The orphan growth of some chance shower,
Which brought it there, and then forgot
All care of the frail nursling's lot,—
A lily with its silver bells
Perfumed like the spring's treasure-cells;
Yet drooping, pale, as if too late
Mourning for their neglected state.
It was the fittest flower to grow
Over the conscious clay below.

Bethought the countess of a tale
Connected with the lonely vale;
Some bard, who died before his fame;
Whose songs remain'd, but not his name:
It told his tomb was by the wave,
In life his haunt, in death his grave.
Sadly she mused upon the fate
That still too often must await
The gifted hand which shall awake
The poet's lute, and for its sake
All but its own sweet self resign,—
Thou loved lute! to be only thine.
For what is genius, but deep feeling
Waken'd by passion to revealing?
And what is feeling, but to be
Alive to every misery,

While the heart too fond, too weak,
Lies open for the vulture's beak?
Alas! for him possess'd of all
That wins and keeps a world in thrall,
Of all that makes the soul aspire,
Yet vow'd to a neglected lyre;
Who finds, the first, a golden mine,
Sees the veins yield, the treasures shine,
Gazes until his eye grows dim,
Then learns that it is not for him;
One who, albeit his wayward mood
Pines for and clings to solitude,
Has too much humanness of heart
To dwell from all his kind apart;
But seeks communion for the dreams
With which his vision'd spirit teems;

Would fain in other cups infuse
His own delights, and fondly woos
The world, without that worldliness
Which wanting, there is no success;
Hears his song sink unmark'd away,—
Swanlike his soul sinks with its lay,—
Lifts to his native heaven his eyes,
Turns to the earth, despairs and dies;
Leaving a memory whose reward
Might lesson many a future bard,
Or, harder still, a song whose fame
Has long outlived its minstrel's name.
"Oh, must this be!" CLEMENZA said,
"Thus perish quite the gifted dead!
How many a wild and touching song
To my own native vales belong,

Whose lyrist's name will disappear
Like his who sleeps forgotten here!
Not so; it shall be mine to give
The praise that bids the poet live.
There is a flower, a glorious flower,
The very fairest of my bower,
With shining leaf, aroma breath,
Befitting well a victor wreath;
The Golden Violet shall be
The prize of Provence minstrelsy.
Open I 'll fling my castle hall
To throng of harps and festival,
Bidding the bards from wide and far
Bring song of love or tale of war,
And it shall be mine own to set
The victor's crown of Violet."

THE FIRST DAY.

'T is May again, another May,
Looking as if it meant to stay;
So many are its thousand flowers,
So glorious are its sunny hours,
So green its earth, so blue its sky,
As made for hope's eternity.

By night with starlike tapers gleaming,
And music like an odour streaming;
By day with portals open flung,
While bugle note and trumpet rung;
Rose Isaure's towers: and gathered there,
Again, the gifted, young and fair
Have at Clemenza's summons met,
In contest for the Violet.

Her heralds had been to distant lands
To call together the joyeuse bands,
And they had hasten'd. England had sent
Her harp across the blue element;
The Spaniard had come from the land of romance;
And the flower of her minstrels had gather'd in
France,
From far and from near; it was strange to see
The bards of Erin and Italy
Mingle together with those that came
From the highland home they so loved to name.

Hark to the sound of yon silver horn,
And the sweep of the harp to the distance borne;
'T is the hour of meeting, and welcome now
To the gifted hand and the laurel'd brow.

Young knight, think not of hawk or hound;
Fair maiden, fling not thy smiles around;
Warrior, regard not the sword at thy side;
Baron, relax thou thy brow of pride;
Let worldly coldness and care depart,
And yield to the spell of the minstrel's art.

'T was a spacious hall, and around it rose
Carved pillars as white as the snows;
Between, the purple tapestry swept,
Where work'd in myriad shades were kept
Memories of many an ancient tale,
And of many a blooming cheek now pale.
The dome above like a glory shone,
Or a cloud which the sunset lingers upon,
While the tinted pane seem'd the bright resort,
Where Iris' self held her minstrel court;

And beautiful was the coloured fall
Of the floating hues round the stately hall.

In groups around mix'd the gay throng,
Knight, noble, lady, child of song.
At one end was upraised a throne,
On which the countess sat alone;
Not with droop'd eye and bow'd-down head,
And simple white veil round her spread,
As lean'd she o'er the lonely wave,
Dreaming of the dead minstrel's grave;
But purple robe and golden band
Bespoke the ladye of the land;
Rich gems upon her arm were placed,
And lit the zone around her waist;
But none were in her braided hair,
One only Violet was there,

The golden flower, which won all eyes,
Destined to be the minstrel prize.

They pass'd around the silver urn
Whose lot must fix the poet's turn;
To a young Provence bard it came,—
He drew, and drew CLEMENZA's name.
And forth at once young VIDAL sprung,
His light lute o'er his shoulder flung,
Then paused,—for over cheek and brow,
Like lightning, rush'd the crimson glow;
A low sound trembled from that lute,
His lip turn'd pale, his voice was mute;
He sent a hurried glance around
As if in search; at last he found
The eyes without whose light to him
The very heaven above was dim:

At once his hand awoke the chords,
At once his lip pour'd tuneful words,
And, gazing on his lady's smile,
Bade his soft notes arise the while.

THE BROKEN SPELL:

THE FIRST PROVENÇAL MINSTREL'S LAY.

A FAIRY TALE.

WHERE on earth is the truth that may vie
With woman's lone and long constancy?
Lovers there have been who have died
For the love that they made a warrior's pride;

And a lover once, when a world was the prize,
Threw away his chance for a lady's eyes:
But not his the love that changes not
Mid the trials and griefs of an ill-starr'd lot;
Not like the rainbow, that shines on high
Brighter and purer as darker the sky.
But woman's creed of suffering bears
All that the health and the spirit wears;
Absence but makes her love the more,
For her thoughts then feed on their own sweet store;
And is not hers the heart alone
That has pleasure and pride in a prize when won?
Her eye may grow dim, her cheek may grow pale,
But tell they not both the same fond tale?
Love's lights have fled from her eye and cheek,
To burn and die on the heart which they seek.

Alas! that so often the grave should be
The seal of woman's fidelity!

On the horizon is a star,
Its earliest, loveliest one by far;
A blush is yet upon the sky,
As if too beautiful to die,—
A last gleam of the setting sun,
Like hope when love has just begun;
That hour when the maiden's lute,
And minstrel's song, and lover's suit,
Seem as that their sweet spells had made
This mystery of light and shade.

That last rich sigh is on the gale
Which tells when summer's day is over,

The sigh which closing flowers exhale
After the bee, their honey lover,
As to remind him in his flight
Of what will be next noon's delight.

'T is a fair garden, almond trees
Throw silver gifts upon the breeze;
Lilies, each a white-robed bride,
With treasures of pure gold inside,
Like marble towers a king has made;—
And of its own sweet self afraid,
A hyacinth's flower-hung stalk is stooping,
Lovelier from its timid drooping:—
But in the midst is a rose stem,
The wind's beloved, the garden's gem.
No wonder that it blooms so well:
Thy tears have been on every leaf;

And, Mirzala, thy heart can tell
How lasting that which feeds on grief.

'T was a branch of roses her lover gave
Amid her raven curls to wave,
When they bade farewell, with that gentle sorrow
Of the parting that sighs, "we meet to-morrow;"
Yet the maiden knows not if her tears are shed
Over the faithless or over the dead.
She has not seen his face since that night
When she watch'd his shadow by pale moonlight,
And that branch has been cherish'd as all that was left
To remind her of love and hope bereft.

She was one summer evening laid
Beneath the tulip tree's green shade,

When from her favourite rose a cloud
Floated like those at break of day;—
She mark'd its silvery folds unshroud,
And there a radiant figure lay.
And in murmurs soft as those
Which sweep the sea at evening close,
Spoke the Spirit of the rose:—
"Mirzala, thy lover sleeps
While his mistress for him weeps.
He is bound by magic spell,
Of force which woman's love may quell;
I will guide thee to the hall
Where thy faith may break his thrall.
Think thou if thy heart can dare
All that thou must look on there.
Turn not thou for hope nor fear,
Till the marble hall appear.

There thou wilt thy lover see
Dead to life, and love, and thee.
Only truth so pure as thine
Could approach the charmed shrine.
Press thy lips to the cold stone,
He will wake,—the spell be done!
Hast thou courage like thy love?
Follow thou the snow-white dove."

And MIRZALA rose up, and there
Was a fair dove on that rose tree,
With white wings glittering on the air,
Like foam upon a summer sea.
She follow'd it until she stood
By where a little boat lay moor'd
To the green willow, from the flood
But by a water-flag secured.

She enter'd, and it cut the tide;
Odours and music fill'd the sail,
As if a rose and lute had sigh'd
A mingled breath upon the gale.
It was at first a lovely scene:
Leaves and branches wreathed a screen,
Sunbeams there might wander through;
Glimpses of a sky of blue,
Like the hopes that smile to cheer
The earthliness of sorrow here;
And like summer queens, beside,
Roses gazed upon the tide,
Each one longing to caress
Her own mirror'd loveliness;
And the purple orchis shone
Rich, as shines an Indian stone;

And the honeysuckle's flower
Crimson, as a sunset hour;
But too soon the blooms are past,—
When did ever beauty last?
And there came a dreary shade,
Of the yew and cypress made,
Moaning in the sullen breeze;
And at length not even these,
But rocks in wild confusion hurl'd,
Relics of a ruin'd world.
Wide, more wide, the river grew,
Blacker changed its dreary hue,
Till, oppress'd, the wearied eye
Only gazed on sea and sky—
Sea of death, and sky of night,
Where a storm had been like light.

Mirzala was pale, yet still
Shrank she not for dread of ill.
She cross'd the sea, and she gain'd the shore;
But little it recks to number o'er
The wearying days and the heavy fears,
When hope could only smile through tears,
The perils, the pains, through which she pass'd,
Till she came to a castle's gate at last.

'Twas evening; but the glorious sky,
With its purple light and Tyrian dye,
Was contrast strange to the drear heath
Which bleak and desolate lay beneath.
Trees, but leafless all, stood there,
For the lightning flash had left them bare;
The grass lay wither'd, as if the wind
Of the Siroc had mark'd its red course; behind

The bright clouds shone on the river's face,
But the death-black waters had not a trace
Of the crimson blaze that over them play'd:
It seem'd as if a curse were laid
On the grass, on the river, the tree, and the flower,
And shut them out from the sunbeam's power;
And with the last ray which the sunbeam threw,
The dove flew up, and vanished too.
And MIRZALA knew she had reach'd that hall
Where her lover lay sleeping in magic thrall;
And she sat her down by a blasted tree,
To watch for what her fate might be.
But at midnight the gates rolled apart with a sound
Like the groan sent forth from the yawning ground.
On she went with scarce light to show
That gulf and darkness were below,—

Light like the wan blue flames that wave
Their death-torch o'er the murderer's grave;
And flickering shapes beset the way,
Watching in gloom to seize their prey,
More terrible, for that the eye
Wandered in dim uncertainty:
But MIRZALA pressed fearless on,
Till every dreary shade was gone

At once bursting into day
There a radiant garden lay.
There were tall and stately trees
With green boughs, in canopies
For the rose beneath, that smiled
Like a young and favourite child;
With its purple wealth the vine,
Mixed with silver jessamine,

Stretch'd around from tree to tree,
Like a royal tapestry;
Sweet sounds floated on the air,
Lutes and voices mingled there,
And a thousand flowers blent
Into one delicious scent;
Singing birds and azure skies,
Made a spot like Paradise.
Mirzala paused not to lave
Her pale forehead in the wave,
Though each fountain was as bright
As if form'd of dew and light.
Paused she not for the sweet song,
On the rich air borne along.
Fair forms throng'd around with flowers
Breathing of spring's earliest hours;

Others from their baskets roll'd
Fruits of ruby and of gold.
Vainly! nothing could delay,
Nothing win the maiden's stay.
And the magic scene again
Changed to a white marble fane,
And as MIRZALA drew near,
Saw she two bright forms appear.
The first wore gorgeous coronet,
With topaz, pearl, and sapphire set,
And a diamond zone embraced
The rich robe around her waist;
And as conscious of her power
In her great and royal dower,
With a smile that seem'd to say,
Only gold can clear thy way,

She her casket show'd, where shone
Precious ore and Indian stone.
"Oh! if gold could win his heart,
I would from the search depart;
All my offering must be
True and spotless constancy."
Then to the other shape she turn'd,
Whose cheek with crimson blushes burn'd
But to think love could be sold
For a heartless gift of gold.
From her lily-braided hair
Took the spirit bud as fair
As if to summer suns unknown,
Gave it the maiden, and was gone.

Then Mirzala stood by a portal barr'd,
Where held the Lion King his guard;

But touch'd by that bud the lion grew tame,
And the chained portals asunder came.
It was darkness all in that magic room,
But a sweet light stream'd from the lily's bloom.
And MIRZALA look'd on her lover's face,
And he woke at the touch of her soft embrace.
Joy, joy for the maiden, her task is done,—
The spell is broken, her lover is won!

THE next who rose had that martial air,
Such as stately warrior wont to wear;
Haughty his step, and sun and toil
Had left on his cheek their darker soil,
And on his brow of pride was the scar,
The soldier's sign of glorious war;
And the notes came forth like the bearing bold
Of the knightly deeds which their numbers told.

THE FALCON:

THE LAY OF THE NORMAN KNIGHT.

I HEAR a sound o'er hill and plain,
It doth not pass away.
Is it the valleys that ring forth
Their welcome to the day?
Or is it that the lofty woods,
Touch'd by the morn, rejoice?
No, 't is another sound than these,—
It is the battle's voice.
I see the martial ranks, I see
Their banners floating there,
And plume and spear rise meteor like
Upon the reddening air.
One mark'd I most of all,—he was
Mine own familiar friend;

A blessing after him was all
My distant lip could send.
Curse on the feeble arm that hung
Then useless by my side!
I lay before my tent and watch'd
Onwards the warriors ride.
De Valence he was first of all,
Upon his foam-white steed;
Never knight curb'd more gallantly
A fiery courser's speed.
His silver armour shone like light,
In the young morning's ray;
And round his helm the snowy plume
Danced like the ocean spray.
Sudden a bird burst through the air,—
I knew his falcon's flight;

He perch'd beside his master's hand,—
Loud shouts rose at the sight.
For many there deem'd the brave bird
Augur'd a glorious day;
To my dark thoughts, his fond caress
Seem'd a farewell to say.
One moment and he spread his wings,
The bird was seen no more;
Like the sea waves, the armed ranks
Swept onwards as before.
The height whereon I lay look'd down
On a thick-wooded land,
And soon amid the forest shade
I lost the noble band.
The snow-white steed, the silver shield,
Amid the foliage shone;

But thicker closed the heavy boughs,
And even these were gone.
Yet still I heard the ringing steps
Of soldiers clad in mail,
And heard the stirring trumpet send
Defiance on the gale.
Then rose those deadlier sounds that tell
When foes meet hand to hand,—
The shout, the yell, the iron clang
Of meeting spear and brand.
I have stood when my own life-blood
Pour'd down like winter rain;
But rather would I shed its last
Than live that day again.
Squire, page, and leech my feverish haste
To seek me tidings sent;

And day was closing as I paced
Alone beside my tent;
When suddenly upon my hand
A bird sank down to rest,—
The falcon,—but its head was droop'd,
And soil'd and stain'd its breast.
A light glanced through the trees: I knew
His courser's snowy hide,—
But that was dash'd with blood; one bound,
And at my feet it died.
I rushed towards my sword,—alas!
My arm hung in its sling;
But, as to lead my venture,
The falcon spread its wing.
I met its large beseeching eye
Turn'd to mine, as in prayer;

I follow'd, such was its strange power,
Its circuit through the air.
It led me on,—before my path
The tangled branches yield;
It led me on till we had gain'd
The morning's battle-field.
The fallen confused, and numberless!
"O grief! it is in vain,
My own beloved friend, to seek
For thee amid the slain."
Yet paused the falcon, where heap'd dead
Spoke thickest of the fray;
There, compass'd by a hostile ring,
Its noble master lay.
None of his band were near, around
Were only foes o'erthrown;

It seem'd as desperate he rush'd,
And fought, and fell alone.
The helm, with its white plumes, was off;
The silver shield blood-stain'd;
But yet within the red right hand
The broken sword remain'd.
That night I watch'd beside, and kept
The hungry wolves away,
And twice the falcon's beak was dipp'd
In blood of birds of prey.
The morning rose, another step
With mine was on the plain;
A hermit, who with pious aid
Sought where life might remain.
We made De Valence there a grave,
The spot which now he prest;

For shroud, he had his blood-stain'd mail,—
Such suits the soldier best.
A chestnut tree grew on the spot;
It was as if he sought,
From the press of surrounding foes,
Its shelter while he fought.
The grave was dug, a cross was raised,
The prayers were duly said,
While perch'd upon a low-hung bough
The bird moan'd overhead.
We laid the last sod on the grave,—
The falcon dropp'd like lead;
I placed it in my breast in vain,
Its gallant life was fled.
We bade the faithful creature share
Its master's place of rest;

I took two feathers from its wing,
They are my only crest.
Spring leaves were green upon the trees
What time De Valence fell
Let autumn's yellow forests say
If I avenged him well.
And then I laid aside my sword,
And took my lute to thee,
And vow'd for my sworn-brother's sake
I would a wanderer be;
Till for a year I had proclaim'd
In distant lands his fame,
And taught to many a foreign court
De Valence's brave name.
Never was heart more kind and true,
Never was hand more bold;

Never was there more loyal knight.—
Gentles, my tale is told.

STRANGE contrast to each gorgeous vest,
His rough plaid crost upon his breast,
And looking worn, and wild, and rude,
As just from mountain solitude;
Though weary brow and drooping eye
Told wanderer 'neath a distant sky.
Heedless of all, with absent look,
The key of his clairshach he took;
But the first breath, oh! it was sweet,
As river gliding at your feet,
And leaving, as it murmurs by,
Your pleasant dream, half thought, half sigh.

THE DREAM:

THE LAY OF THE SCOTTISH MINSTREL.

THERE are no sounds in the wanderer's ear,
To breathe of the home that he holds so dear:
Your gales pass by on the breath of the rose,
The vines on your sunny hills repose;
And your river is clear as its silver tide
Had no task save to mirror the flowers beside.
Thou art fair, Provence, but not fair to me
As the land which my spirit is pining to see,
Where the pine rises darkly, the lord of the wood,
Or stands lone in the pass, where the warrior has stood;
Where the torrent is rushing like youth in its might,
And the cavern is black as the slumber of night;

Where the deer o'er the hills bound, as fleet and as free
As the shaft from the bow, as the wave of the sea;
Where the heather is sweet as the sleep that is found
By the hunter who makes it his bed on the ground;
Where the might of the chieftain goes down to his son
In numbers as wild as the deeds that are done;
Where the harp has notes caught from the storm and the flood,
When foemen are gathering together in blood;
Yet has others that whisper the maiden, of love,
In tones that re-echo the linnet and dove;
Where the mountain-ash guards us from elfin and fay;
Where the broom, spendthrift like, flings its gold wreath away;
And the harebell shines blue in the depth of the vale.
Oh! dear country of mine, of thee be my tale.

The lady awoke from the slumber of night,
But the vision had melted away from her sight.
She turn'd to her pillow for rest, but again
The same vision of fear became only more plain.

She dream'd she stood on a fair hill side,
And their lands lay beneath in summer pride,
The sky was clear, and the earth was green,
Her heart grew light as she gazed on the scene.
Two fair oak trees most caught her eye,
The one looked proudly up to the sky,
The other bent meekly, as if to share
The shelter its proud boughs flung on the air.
There came no cloud on the face of day,
Yet even as she look'd they pass'd away,
Unmark'd as though they had never been,
Save a young green shoot that had sprung between.

And while she gazed on it, she could see
That sapling spring up to a noble tree.
Again she woke, and again she slept,
But the same dream still on her eyelids kept.
The morning came at last, but its light
Seem'd not to her as her mornings bright.
A sadness hung on her lip and brow,
She could not shake off, she shamed to avow.

While the hounds that chase the stag and roe
Were gathering in the court below,
She walk'd with her lord, and mark'd that on him
A somewhat of secret shadow lay dim;
And sought she the cause with that sweet art,
Which is the science of woman's fond heart,
That may not bear the loved one to brood
O'er aught of sorrow in solitude;

And with gentle arm in his entwined,
And witching cheek on his reclined,
The source of his gloom is to her made known,
'T is a dream,—she starts, for she hears her own.
But his cares, at least, to the summons yield
Of the baying hound and the cheerful field;
At the horn's glad peal, he downwards flung
From the terraced wall, and to stirrup sprung.
And the lady forgot her bodings too,
As his steed dash'd aside the morning dew,
So graceful he sate, while his flashing eye
Seem'd proud of his gallant mastery.
But the swell of the horn died away on the air,
And the hunter and hounds were no longer there;
Then Matilda turn'd to her loneliness,
With a cloud on her spirit she might not repress.

She took up her pencil, unconscious she drew
A heavy branch of the funeral yew;
She reach'd her lute and its song awoke,
But the string, as she touch'd it, wail'd and broke;
Then turn'd she the poet's gifted leaf,
But the tale was death, and the words were grief;
And still, with a power she might not quell,
The dream of the night o'er her hung like a spell.
Day pass'd, but her lord was still away;
Word came he was press'd to a festal array;—
'T was a moment's thought,—around her was thrown
The muffling plaid, and she hasten'd alone
To the glen, where dwelt the awful maid
To whom the spirits of air had said
Unearthly words, and given a power
On the wind, and the stars, and the midnight hour.

She reach'd that glen; not till then she took
One moment's breath, or one moment's look.
When paused she in awe—'twas so lone, so still;
Silence was laid on the leaf and the rill,—
It was stillness as that of the tomb around,
The beat of her heart was the only sound.
On one side, bleak rocks the barrier made,
As the first great curse were upon them laid;
Drear and desolate, stern and bare,
Tempests and time had been ravaging there.
And there gather'd darkly the lowering sky,
As if fearing its own obscurity;
And spectre like, around the vale,
Pale larches flung their long arms on the gale,
Till the sward of the glen sloped abruptly away,
And a gloomy lake under the precipice lay.

Never was life or sound in its wave,—
An abyss like that of the depths of the grave.
On yet she went; till, sudden as thought,
By her stood the seer whom she wildly sought.
She had heard no step, seen no shadow glide,
Yet there the prophetess was by her side.
As the skilful in music tone their chords,
The lady had arm'd her with soothing words;
But she look'd on the face that fronted her there,
And her words and their substance melted in air.
Pale as the corpse on its death-bed reclining;
And hands through whose shadow the starbeam was shining,
As they waved from her forehead the raven cloud
Of hair that fell to her feet like a shroud;
And awful eyes,—never had earth
To their fearful wanderings given birth,

Their light and their haunting darkness came
From gazing on those it is sin to name.
She spoke, it was low, but it sank on the soul
With deadlier force than the thunder's roll;
Yet her voice was sweet, as to it were left
The all of human feeling not reft:
"I heard the words come on the midnight wind;
They pass'd, but their message is left behind;
I watch'd the course of a falling star,
And I heard the bode of its cry from afar;
I talk'd with the spirit of yonder lake;
I sorrow'd, and, lady, 't was for thy sake.
Part from thy face the sunny hair,
So young, and yet death is written there.
No one is standing beside thee now,
Yet mine eyes can see a noble brow,

I can see the flash of a clear dark eye,
And a stately hunter is passing by.
You will go to the tomb, but not alone,
For the doom of that hunter is as your own.
Hasten thee home, and kiss the cheek
Of thy young fair child, nor fear to break
The boy's sweet slumber of peace; for not
With his father's or thine is that orphan's lot.
As the sapling sprang up to a stately tree,
He will flourish; but not, thou fond mother, for thee.
Now away, for those who would blast thy sight
Are gathering fast on the clouds of night;
Away, while yet those small clear stars shine,
They 'll grow pale at the meeting of me and mine."

Alas, for the weird of the wizard maid!
Alas, for the truth of the words which she said!

Ah, true for aye will those bodings be
That tell of mortal misery!
I've seen my noble chieftain laid low,
And my harp o'er his grave wail'd its song of woe;
And again it wail'd for the gentle bride
Who with hastening love soon slept by his side.
He pass'd away in the early spring,
And she in the summer, whose sun could bring
Warmth and life, in its genial hour,
To all save the drooping human flower.
I left the land, I could not stay
Where the gallant, the lovely, had pass'd away;
Yet now my spirit is pining to greet
My youthful chief in his parent's seat.
I saw him once in a foreign land,
With plume on head, and with spear in hand;

And many a lady's eye was bent
On the stranger knight in the tournament;
He had his father's stately brow,
And the falcon eye that flash'd below;
But when he knelt as the victor down,
(Fair was the maiden who gave the crown,)
A few low words the young warrior said,
And his lip had his mother's smile and red.
He is dwelling now in his native glen,
And there my harp must waken again;
My last song shall be for him young, him brave,
Then away to die at my master's grave!

Led by a child whose sunny air,
And rosy cheek young Health might wear,

When rising from the mountain wave,
Fresh as the stream its freshness gave;
But gentle eyes, with softness fraught,
As if their tenderness they caught
From gazing on the pallid brow
Whose only light was from them now.
Beautiful it was to see
Such love in early infancy.
Far from the aged steps she led,
Long since the guiding light had fled;
And meek and sad the old man grew,
As nearer life's dark goal he drew;
All solace of such weary hour
Was that child's love, and his own power
O'er music's spirit, and the store
He treasured up of legend lore.

She led him gently to his seat,
And took her place beside his feet,
Up gazing with fond fixed eye,
Lest sigh should pass unnoticed by.
A clear rich prelude forth he rang,
Brighten'd his look as thus he sang;
The colour lit his forehead pale,
As the master told his ancient tale.

THE CHILD OF THE SEA:

THE LAY OF THE SECOND PROVENÇAL BARD.

It was a summer evening; and the sea
Seem'd to rejoice in its tranquillity;
Rolling its gentle waters to the west,
Till the rich crimson blush'd upon their breast,

Uniting lovingly the wave and sky,
Like Hope content in its delight to die.
A young queen with her maidens sat and sung,
While ocean thousands of sweet echoes flung,
Delighting them to hear their voices blent
With music from the murmuring element.
Then cast they on the winds their radiant hair,
Then gather'd of the pink shells those most rare,
To gem their flying curls, that each might seem
A Nereid risen from the briny stream.
When sudden cried the queen, "Come, gaze with me
At what may yonder in the distance be,"
All gather'd round. A little speck was seen,
Like a mere shadow, on the billows green.
Nearer and nearer, more distinct it grew,
Till came a fragile vessel full in view;

As if at random flung to a chance gale,
Uncheck'd, unguided, flapp'd a silken sail;
And saw they all alone a lady there,
Her neck and arms to the rude sea-wind bare,
And her head bow'd as in its last despair.
It came no nearer, on the sea it lay;
The wind, exhausted, had died quite away.
They had a fairy boat, in which 't was sport
Amid the inland channels to resort;
Their fair hands raised the sail, and plied the oar,
And brought the lonely wanderer to their shore;
Then mark'd they how her scarlet mantle's fold
Was round a young, a lovely infant roll'd.
They brought the wearied stranger to their tent,
Flung o'er her face cool water, gifted scent,
And touch'd her lips with wine, though all too plain
That death was darkening in each frozen vein:

Eager she gazed where the queen stood beside,
Her hands stretch'd to her own fair boy, and died.

And thus the babe was left without a name,
Child of the Sea, without a kindred claim:
He never felt the want; that gentle queen
Nurtured his infancy, as though he had been
The brother of her own sweet ISABELLE;
But as he grew she thought it need to tell
His history, and gave the cloak whose fold
Was heavy with rich work and broider'd gold;
And also gave his mother's carkanet,
With precious stones in regal order set.
In truth he was well worthy of her care;
None of the court might match his princely air,
And those who boasted of their bearing high
Quail'd at the flashing of his falcon eye.

Young as he was, none better ruled the speed
Or curb'd the mettle of the wayward steed,
None better knew the hunter's gentle craft,
None could wing from the bow a truer shaft;
And noble was his courtesy and bland,
Graceful his bearing in the saraband;
He knew the learned scroll the clerk displays,
And touch'd the lute to the fine poet's lays;
And many bright eyes would their glances fling
On the young victor in the tilters' ring.

Young as he was, the seal was on his heart,
That burning impress which may not depart
Where it has once been set, Love's fiery seal:
But little need I dwell on what all feel;
Gay, grave, cold, proud, stern, high, say is there one
Whom at some time Love has not breathed upon?

And Eglamour turn'd to Isabelle,
As to his destiny's best oracle:
'T was at midnight, beneath her bower, he sung
Those gentle words, with which love gifts the tongue.

THE SONG.

Oh! give me but my gallant steed,
My spurs and sword to serve at need,
The shield that has my father's crest,
Thy colours, lady, on my breast,
And I will forth to wild warfare,
And win thee, or will perish there.
I am unknown, of a lost line,
And thou, love, art the flow'r of thine.
I know thou art above me far,
Yet still thou art hope's leading star;

For love is like the breathing wind,
That everywhere may entrance find.
I saw thee, sure the fairest one
The morning light e'er look'd upon;
No wonder that my heart was moved,
'Twere marvel if I had not loved.
Long, long held by a spell too dear,
Thy smile has kept thy loiterer here.
Almost it seem'd enough for me
Of Heav'n to only gaze on thee.
But love lights high and gallant thought,
A rich prize must be dearly bought.
Unworthy votary at thy shrine,
I scorn my falchion's idle shine;
To-morrow I will wend away
To dim it in the battle fray.

Lady, farewell! I pray thee give
One look whereon may absence live,
One word upon my ear to dwell,
And then, sweet lady mine, farewell.

Then softly open was a casement flung,
And a fair face from out the lattice hung;
The trace of heavy tears was on her cheek,
But dash'd aside, as though the heart were weak
In tenderness, yet it sought strength to show
An outward firmness, whate'er lurk'd below.
'Twas but a moment's struggle; and the pride
That nerves the softness of a hero's bride
Was on her lofty forehead, as she gave
A sunny curl beside his plume to wave.
"I have another gift which you must take,
And guard it, Eglamour, well for my sake:

It is a charmed ring—this emerald stone
Will be a sign, when thou art from me gone.
Mark if it changes; if a spot be seen
On the now spotless ground of lighted green,
Danger is round me; haste thou then to me,
Thou know'st how fearless is my trust in thee.
There is a weight to-night upon my heart;
Ah! peace for me can be but where thou art."
She spoke no more, she felt her bosom swell,
How could her lip find utterance for farewell?
He took the curl, one kiss is on it press'd,
Then gave it to its sanctuary, his breast;
And doff'd his plumed helm, "Dear lady, now
Take the last offering of thy lover's vow;
And for thy beauty's honour, I will go
Bareheaded to the battle, weal or woe.

Never shall crested casque my temples grace
Until again I look on thy sweet face."
A shriek burst from her—it was lost in air;
She call'd upon his name,—he was not there.
But leave we her, her solitude to keep,
To pray the Virgin's pity, wail and weep
O'er all the tender thoughts that have such power
Upon the constant heart in absent hour;
And go we forth with our young knight, to see
What high adventure for his arms may be.
Onward he rode upon a barbed steed,
Milk-white as is the maiden's bridal weed,
Champing his silver bit. From throat to heel
Himself was clad in Milan's shining steel;
The surcoat that he wore was work'd with gold;
And from his shoulder fell the scarlet fold

Of a rich mantle lined with miniver,
His mother's once, all that he held from her,
Save the bright chain, with pearl and ruby strung,
Which rainbow-like outside his hauberk hung;
His ashen lance lay ready in its rest;
His shield was poised beside him, and its crest
Was a young eaglet trying its first flight,
The motto, "I must seek to win my right:"
Two greyhounds ran beside; and mortal sight
Had never look'd upon more gallant knight.
Bareheaded so his features met the view
Touch'd by the tender morning's early hue:—
And eyes like the wild merlin's when she springs
After long prison on her eager wings,
Fierce in their beauty, with that flashing glance
Which dazzles as it were a flying lance,

Giving the sternness of a warrior's air
To what had else seem'd face almost too fair:
And, as in mockery of the helm, behind,
Like plumes, his bright curls danced upon the wind;
Curls of that tint o'er which a sunbeam flings
A thousand colours on their auburn rings.

Two days he journey'd, till he reach'd a wood,
A very dwelling-place of solitude;
Where the leaves grew by myriads, and the boughs
Were fill'd with linnets, singing their sweet vows;
And dreaming, lover-like with open eye,
He envied the gay birds that they might fly
As with a thought from green tree to green tree,
And wing their way with their dear loves to be.

Even as he mused on this, he heard a cry,
A bitter shriek for mercy pleading high.
He rush'd and saw two combatants with one
Whose strength seem'd in th' unequal battle done;
And praying, weeping, knelt a maiden near,
Whose piercing voice it was had reach'd his ear.
His lance flies, and one felon bites the ground;
The other turns, and turns for a death wound.
Their champion moved the rescued twain to greet,
Just one embrace, and they are at his feet.
And gazed Sir Eglamour on their strange dress,
But more on the fair dame's great loveliness;
For, saving one, to him still beauty's queen,
A face so radiant had he never seen.
Together, for the sun was high in June,
They sought a shelter from the sultry noon.

There was shade all around, but had one place
Somewhat more softness in its gentler grace;
There of fair moss a pleasant couch was made,
And a small fountain o'er the wild flowers play'd,
A natural lute, plaining amid the grove,
Less like the voice of sorrow than of love.
They told their history: the maiden came
From a far heathen land, of foreign name;
The Soldan's daughter, but she fled her state,
To share a Christian lover's humbler fate:
That lover was from Italy, his hand
Had o'er a cunning art a strange command;
For he had curious colours that could give
The human face, so like, it seem'd to live.
He had cross'd over land and over sea
To gaze on the fair Saracen; and she,

When seen, was like the visions that were brought
In unreal beauty on his sleeping thought.
And Love is like the lightning in its might,
Winging where least bethought its fiery flight,
Melting the blade, despite the scabbard's guard.
Love, passionate Love, hast thou not thy reward,
Despite of all the soil and stain that clings
When earth thou touchest with thy heavenly wings,
In rich return'd affection, which doth make
Light of all suffering, for its own dear sake?
Together they had fled by sea and land,
And the youth led her to Italia's strand,
Where he had a lone home in Arno's vale,
A fit nest for his lovely nightingale,
Till stopp'd by those fierce outlaws, who had paid
Their life's base forfeit to the victor's blade.

Mused Eglamour, in silence, on the art
Which even to absence pleasure could impart;
Ever before the eyes the one loved face,
Aiding the memory with its present grace.
Beautiful art, in pity surely sent
To soothe the banish'd lover's discontent!
Then pray'd they too his history and name,
Wherefore and whence their gallant champion came?
And told he of his vow, and of the maid
For whose sake each high venture was essay'd.
With earnest tone the painter said his way
Beside the palace of the princess lay;
And pray'd of his deliverer that he might
Bear off his likeness to his lady's sight.
And soon saw Eglamour, with glad surprise,
The colours darken, and the features rise.

He gazed within the fountain, and the view
Was not more than the tablet's likeness true.
At length they parted, as those part, in pain,
Who rather wish than hope to meet again.

'T was night, but night which the imperial moon,
Regal in her full beauty, turn'd to noon,
But still the noon of midnight; though the ray
Was clear and bright, it was not that of day;
When EGLAMOUR came to a gate: 'twas roll'd
On its vast hinges back; his eyes behold
"He who counts his life but light,
Let him hunt my deer to-night."
Needed no more, honour might be to win,
Eager our gallant spurr'd his courser in.
A noble park it was: the sweep of green
Seem'd like a sea touch'd with the silver sheen

Of moonlight, with the floating isles of shade
Lithe coppices of shrubs sweet-scented made;
'Twas dotted with small pools, upon whose breast
The radiance seem'd to have a favourite rest,
So bright each crystal surface shone; and, round,
Lines of tall stately trees flung on the ground
Huge mass of shade, while others stood alone,
As if too mighty for companions grown.
And yielded EGLAMOUR to the delight
Which ever must be born of such a night.
When, starting from his dream, he saw stand near,
Bright as the lake they drank from, the white deer.
Instant the leash was from his greyhounds flung,
They would not to the chase, but backwards hung;
To cheer them on he wound his bugle-horn;
And, ere the sound was in the distance borne

Away to silence, rang another strain,
And furious spurr'd a steed across the plain,
Huge like its giant rider. As he pass'd,
His shadow fell, as if a storm had cast
A sudden night around; grasp'd his right hand
A spear, to which our youth's was but a wand;
Black as his shadow on the darken'd field
Was horse and armour; and his gloomy shield
Was as a cloud passing before the stars.
Eglamour set his lance; scarcely it jars
The mail'd rings of the hauberk: down he bent
In time to shun the one his foeman sent;
Wasting its strength it reach'd the lake beside,
And like a fallen tree dash'd in the tide.
Their swords are out like lightning; one whose stroke
Is as the bolt that fells the forest oak,

The other with light arm and ready wound.
At length the black knight's steed rolls on the ground;
He rises like a tower. One desperate blow,
And the blood wells from EGLAMOUR's fair brow;
His shield is dash'd in pieces: but just then,
Ere the recover'd blow was aim'd again,
He stakes his life upon a sudden thrust,
And his fierce foe is levell'd in the dust.
Gazed he in wonder on each giant limb,
Yet scarce he deem'd victory was won by him.
He went on bended knee; "Now, virgin queen,
Who hast my succour in this danger been,
Mother of God, these fair white deer shall be
Offer'd to-morrow at thy sanctuary."
He sat down by a fountain near, and tame
These gentle hinds now at his beckon came;

He lean'd on the soft grassy bed and slept,
And when he waked found they their watch had
kept.
Then sprang he on his steed. The sun was high,
Morning's last blush was fading from the sky
O'er a fair city; there with pious will
He turn'd, his vow'd thanksgiving to fulfil.
He enter'd victor; and around him drew
The multitude, who could not sate their view,
Gazing upon him who the black knight slew,
And yet so young, so fair. Though somewhat now
His cheek had lost its custom'd summer glow,
With paleness from his wound, yet was not one
Could say his peer they e'er had look'd upon.
He found a stately church, and, bending there,
His spoil devoted,—pray'd his lover prayer;

When, rising from his knee, he saw a train
With cross and chaunt enter the holy fane,
Led by a man, though aged, of stately air,
With purple robe, though head and feet were bare.
He ask'd the cause, and he was told, the king
Thus sought some mercy on his suffering;
For that he had, in causeless jealousy,
Exposed his wife and child to the rude sea.
Hope thrill'd the bosom of our ocean knight,
Anxious he stay'd and watch'd the sacred rite;
He saw the old man kneel before the shrine
Where was the image of the Maid Divine.
He pray'd to her that Heaven, now reconciled,
Would pardon his great fault, and give his child
Back to his arms. With that the stranger set
Full in his view the cloak and carkanet.

One moment gazed the king upon his face;
The next, and they are lock'd in fast embrace,
While from their mutual eyes the warm tears run.—
The Virgin Mother hath restored his son.
Hasty thanksgivings, anxious words were said;
Joy for the living, sorrow for the dead,
Mingled together. Oh! for those sweet ties
By which blood links affection's sympathies;
Out on the heartless creed which nulls the claim
Upon the heart of kindred, birth, and name.
Together seek they now the regal hall
So long unknown to aught of festival;
One fill'd with mourning, as now fill'd with joy,
While thousands gather round the princely boy.

Open'd the king his treasury, and gave
His bounty forth free as the boundless wave;

Feasting was spread, the dance, the masque, the song,
Whatever might to revelry belong:
Seem'd the young prince as if he had a charm,
Love to take prisoner, envy to disarm.
Yet e'en while floating thus on fortune's tide,
While each delight the past delight outvied,
Never omitted he at twilight hour,
When sleep and dew fall on the painted flower,
There for the night like bosom friends to dwell,
To kiss the ring of his sweet ISABELLE.
He told his father, whose consent had seal'd
The gentle secret, half in fear reveal'd.
True love is timid, as it knew its worth,
And that such happiness is scarce for earth.
Waited he only for the princely band
With which he was to seek his foster-land,

When gazing on his treasured ring one night
He saw clouds gather on the emerald's light.
Like lightning he has flung him on the steed
His hasty spur then urged to fiery speed.
But leave we him to press his anxious way,
His band to follow with what haste they may;
And turn to the lorn princess who had kept,
With all a woman's truth, the faith she wept
Rather than spoke at parting. It was One
Whose love another faith had bade her shun,—
Ah! shame and sign of this our mortal state,
That ever gentle love can turn to hate,—
Had caused her all this misery. He brought
A charge that she with arts unholy wrought:
For he had seen his rival's picture press'd
To its soft home and altar on her breast;

And hitherto unknown in that far land
Was the sweet cunning of the limner's hand.

It was a fearful charge, all hope was vain,
And she must die the fire's red death of pain,
Unless that she could find some gentle knight
Who would do battle for a maiden's right,
And win; but her accuser never yet
In field or tourney had an equal met.

The fatal day is come, the pile is raised,
As eager for its victim fierce it blazed.
They led her forth: her brow and neck were bare,
Save for the silken veil of unbound hair;
So beautiful, few were there who could brook
To cast on her sweet face a second look.

There stood she, even as a statue stands,
With head droop'd downward, and with clasped hands;
Such small white hands that match'd her ivory feet,
How may they bear that scorching fire to meet!
On her pale cheek there lay a tear, but one
Cold as the icicle of carved stone.
Despair weeps not. Her lip moved as in prayer
Unconsciously; as if prayers had been there,
And they moved now from custom. Triumphing,
Sir Amice rode around the weeping ring:
Once, twice, the trumpet challenges: all fear
To meet th' accuser's never erring spear.
Her lip grows ghastly pale, closes her eye,
It cannot meet its last of agony.

But, hark! there comes a distant rushing sound,
The crowd gives way before a courser's bound.

She turns her face; her scarce raised eyes behold
The unhelm'd head shine with its curls of gold.
Sir Amice knew his rival. What! so slight,
So young, would he dare cope with him in fight?
Their blades flash out, but only one is red;
Rolls on the ground the traitor's felon head,
The dust around with his life-blood is dyed,
And Eglamour darts to his maiden's side.
Her lip is red, her eyes with tears are dim,
But she is safe, and she is saved by him.

My tale is told. May minstrel words express
The light at noon, or young love's happiness?
Enow, I trow, of that sweet dream can tell
Without my aiding. Gentles, fare ye well.

Wild and pale was the strange brow
Of the bard advancing now;
Eyeballs with such wandering light
Like the meteors of the night,
As if they that fearful look
From their own dark mountains took,
Where the evil ones are found—
Gloomy haunt, and cursed ground;
Sank his voice to mutter'd breath,
The tale of sorrow, sin, and death.

THE RING:

THE GERMAN MEINNESINGER'S TALE.

Both were young, and both were fair:
She with her shower of golden hair

Falling like flowers, and her bright blue eye
Like the sparkling wave the oar dashes by;
And he with lip and brow as fine
As the statues his country has made divine.

And the pair at the holy altar are kneeling,
While the priest that bond of love is sealing,
When pleasures and sorrows are blent in one,
And Heaven blesses what earth has done.
They love, they are loved, that youth and maid,
Yet over them hangs a nameless shade;
They are contrasts each: the broider'd gold
And red gems shine on his mantle's fold;
While the young bride's simple russet dress,
Though well it suits with her loveliness,
Is not a bridal robe fit for the bride
Of one so begirt with pomp and pride:

And on his brow and on his cheek
Are signs that of wildest passions speak,
Of one whose fiery will is his law;
And his beauty, it strikes on the heart with awe:
And the maiden, hers is no smile to brook
In meekness the storm of an angry look;
For her forehead is proud, and her eyes' deep blue
Hath at times a spirit flashing through,
That speaks of feelings too fierce to dwell
In, woman, thy heart's sweet citadel.

He placed on the golden nuptial band;
But the ring hath cut the maiden's hand,
And the blood dripp'd red on the altar stone,—
Never that stain from the floor hath gone.
Away he flung, with a curse, that ring,
And replaced it with one more glittering;

And AGATHA smiled, as pleased to bear
Gems that a queen might be joyed to wear.
The priest urged that ring had been bless'd in vain,—
And the count and the maiden left the fane.

Change and time take together their flight,
AGATHA wanders alone by night.
Has change so soon over passion pass'd,
So soon has the veil from love been cast?
The day at the chase, and the night at the wine,
VIVALDI has left his young bride to pine,
To pine if she would: but not hers the eye
To droop in its weeping, the lip but to sigh;
There is rage in that eye, on that lip there is pride,
As it scorn'd the sorrow its scorn could not hide.

Oh! frail are the many links that are
In the chain of affection's tender care,
And light at first: but, alas! few know
How much watching is ask'd to keep them so.
The will that yields, and the winning smile
That soothes till anger forgets the while;
Words whose music never yet caught
The discord of one angry thought;
And all those nameless cares that prove
Their heaviest labour work of love.
Ay, these are spells to keep the heart,
When passion's thousand dreams depart:
But none of this sweet witchcraft came
To fan the young count's waning flame.
Passionate as his own wild skies,
Rank and wealth seem'd light sacrifice

To his German maiden's lowly state;
Chose he as chooses the wood-dove his mate:
But when his paradise was won,
It was not what his fancy had fed upon.

Alas! when angry words begin
Their entrance on the lip to win;
When sullen eye and flushing cheek
Say more than bitterest tone could speak;
And look and word, than fire or steel,
Give wounds more deep,—time cannot heal;
And anger digs, with tauntings vain,
A gulf it may not pass again.

Her lord is gone to some hunter's rite,
Where the red wine-cup passes night;

What now hath AGATHA at home?
And she has left it lone to roam.

But evil thoughts are on her, now
Sweeps the dark shadow o'er her brow.
What doth she forth at such an hour,
When hath the fallen fiend his power?

On through the black-pine forest she pass'd:
Drearily moan'd around her the blast;
Hot and heavy the thick boughs grew,
Till even with pain her breath she drew;
Flicker'd the moonlight over her path,
As the clouds had gather'd together in wrath,
Like the vague hopes whose false lures give birth
To one half the miseries haunting our earth.

Maiden, ah! where is thy way address'd?
Where is the red cross that hung on thy breast,
Safety and solace in danger and fear?
Both are around thee,—why is it not near?
Enter not thou yon cursed dell.
Thy rash step has enter'd. Lost maiden, farewell!

Closed the huge and shapeless crags around,
There was not of life a sight or sound;
The earth was parched, the trees were sear'd,
And blasted every branch appear'd;
At one end yawned a gloomy cave,
Black, as its mouth were that of the grave;
And dark, as if the waters of death
Were in its depths, rose a well beneath.
But the deadliest sight of that deadly place
Was to gaze on the human wanderer's face:

Pale it was, as if fell despair
Had written its worst of lessons there;
The features set like funeral stone,
All of good or kind from their meaning gone;
And the look of defiance to heaven cast,
As if feeling such look must be the last.
Down she knelt by the well, to say
What never prayer may wash away.
It was not a sound that pass'd along,
Nor aught that might to our earth belong.
And her words at once in their terror died,
For the spirit she call'd on stood by her side;
Not one of those fearful shapes that teem
On the midnight fears of the maniac's dream.
But better she could have brook'd to gaze
On the loathliest semblance the grave displays,

Than to meet that brow, whose beauty and power
Had somewhat yet of their earlier hour,
Deeper the present contrast to show;
But pride still struggled in vain with woe,
And in the wild light of the fiery eye
Was written hell's immortality.
He spoke:—"Now the vow of thy faith resign,
And in life or in death VIVALDI is thine.
Seal with thy blood." She bared her arm,
And the life-stream flow'd for the godless charm.
One single drop on her ring was shed,
And the diamond shone as the ruby red.
"Sealed mine own, now this be the sign
That in life or in death VIVALDI is thine."

Farewell, Allemaigne, farewell to thy strand,
They are bound to another, a southern land.

As yet she is not to be own'd as his bride,
For feared VIVALDI his kinsmen's pride;
But safely their anchor at Venice is cast,
And the queen of the ocean is reached at last.
Long had AGATHA wished to see
The sunny vineyards of Italy.
Little was here of what she had dream'd:
Funeral-like the gondolas seem'd;
While the dark waters, parting beneath the oar,
Were too like those she had seen before;
And the count, with his stern and haughty brow,
Seem'd the shadow of one ever present now.

Dreary it is the path to trace,
Step by step of sin's wild race.
Pass we on to a lovely night,
Shone the sea with silver moonlight;

Who would ever dream, but such time
Must be sacred from human crime?
I see two silent figures glide
Moodily by the radiant tide;
I see one fall,—in AGATHA's breast
VIVALDI's dagger hath found a nest:
I hear a heavy plunge, the flood,
Oh! 't is crimson'd with human blood;
I see a meteor shining fair,
It is the sweep of golden hair;
Float the waters from the shore,
The waves roll on, I see no more.

Long years have pass'd,—VIVALDI's name
Is foremost in the lists of fame.
Are there, then spirits, that may steep
Conscience in such a charmed sleep?

No: haggard eye and forehead pale
Tell sadly of a different tale;
And some said, not his wealth nor power
Could bribe them share his midnight hour.

'Tis morn, and shout and trumpet's call
Proclaim that it is festival;
The Doge VIVALDI weds to-day
The bride that owns his city's sway;
Banner and barge float o'er that bride,—
The peerless Adriatic tide.

The galleys paused,—the ring he took.
Why starts the Doge with such wild look?
He bends again, his heart-streams creep;
A pale hand beckons from the deep;

All marvel that he doth not fling
To the sea-bride the marriage ring.
He heard the murmur; none then scann'd,
Save his own eye, the spectral hand!
He drops the ring, then bends again
To snatch it from that hand in vain.
He follows what he could not save,
One false step sinks him in the wave!
All rush the victim to restore,
But never eye beheld him more.

'Twas strange, for there they found the ring.
Some said it was fit gift to bring,
And lay upon the Virgin's shrine,
Of human vanity a sign.
And there, as if by miracle,
One drop of blood beneath it fell;

And, pale as twilight's earliest dew,
Lost the bright ring its ruby hue.
There still may curious eye behold
The relic. But my tale is told.

"Now welcome, fair MARGUERITE, to thee,
Fair flower of Provence minstrelsy."
Came a lovely lady in place,
Like the twilight star in her pensive grace.
White daisies were wreathed in the dark-brown shade
Of her tresses, parted in simple braid:
Her long eyelash was the shadow of night,
And the eye beneath was the morning bright;
For its colour was that of the diamond dew
Which hath caught from the glancing light its hue:

Her cheek was pale, for its blush soon pass'd,—
Loveliest tints are not those which last;
Then again it redden'd, again was gone,
Like a rainbow and rose in unison:
Her smile was sad, as if nature meant
Those lips to live, in their own content;
But Fate pass'd o'er them her stern decree,
And taught them what suffering and sorrow might be:
And sang she in sweet but mournful tone,
As her heart had the misery it painted known.

THE QUEEN OF CYPRUS:

THE PROVENÇAL LADY'S LAY.

A summer isle, which seem'd to be
A very favourite with the sea,

With blue waves but as guardians set,
Wearing them like a coronet;
Once sacred to the smile-zoned Queen,
Whose reign upon the heart hath been,
And is so still. What need hath she
Of shrine to her divinity?
Each fair face is her visible shrine;
She hath been, she will be divine.
But, rose-lipp'd VENUS, thy sweet power
Was unown'd in thy myrtle bower,
Thy marble temple was no more,
Thy worship gone from thine own shore,
What time my tale begins: yet still
Hadst thou left music in the rill,
As if 't had heard thy footstep fall,
And from that time grew musical;

Scent on the flower, as if thy hair
Had lost its own rich odour there;—
All, the green earth, the sunny clime,
Were relics of thy lovely time.

Fair Cyprus, dream-like 'twas to land
Where myrtle groves stretch'd from thy strand,
And paid the freshness of the wave
With fragrance which they sighing gave.
But sunshine seen, but sunshine felt,
You reach'd the palace where she dwelt;
Cyprus's maiden queen, whose reign
Seem'd ancient days restored again,
When it was only beauty's smile
Claim'd fealty of CYTHEREA's isle.
Mid fair dames of her court, a star,
The loveliest of the group by far,

IRENE stood. Was it in pride
Her regal gems were laid aside,
As if she scorn'd them all, content
To be her own best ornament?

The terrace where they stood look'd down
On gathered crowds of her fair town;
'Twas a gay scene: on the one side,
Gardens and groves stretch'd far and wide
In gay confusion, flower and tree
Cover'd the green earth to the sea,
One arm of which begirt the walls
Where rose IRENE's marble halls.
Upon the terrace, with a band
Of the isle's loveliest at her hand,
Was the young queen. 'T was as again
The goddess claim'd her ancient reign,

So fair she was. At first you thought
'T was some divinity, that brought
Her beauty from her native skies;
You met once more those soft dark eyes,
You felt that though to them were given
The colour and the light of heaven,
Yet were they mortal, their deep blue
Was soften'd by a shadowy hue
Of melancholy, such as earth
Will fling upon her fairest birth—
Woman's foreknowledge of the woe
That waits upon her path below.

Is it some festival to-day,
That hither comes the proud array,
Which gathers round the gazing crowd,
And rings the air with plaudits loud?

Sweep seven bold galleys to the land,
Spring from their decks a warrior band,
Dance their white plumes before the breeze
Like summer foam on summer seas,
Flashes the lance like meteor light,
Hauberk and helm are gleaming bright,
And spreads the banner its rich fold,
Where shines on purple work'd in gold
A lion, which a maiden's hand
Holds by a silken rein's command.
Well may'st thou bend, fair queen, thy brow
To the brave warriors greeting now;
Well have they fought for thee and thine,
Sweet flower of thy royal line;
And well may they catch thy sweet eye,
And swear beneath its rule to die.

Yet, young IRENE, on thy side
Is not all triumph's panting pride;
For, like clouds on a troubled sky,
Red and white shades alternate fly
Over thy face; now like the stone
Colour hath never breathed upon,
Now crimson'd with a sudden flush,
As if thy heart had dyed thy blush.
The rebel prince is passing near,—
Thy bearing droops in sudden fear;
He passes, and thine eye is dim
With anxious gazing after him,
And tears are darkening its blue,
Shining on the long lash like dew.
Beautiful weakness! oh, if weak,
That woman's heart should tinge her cheek!

'T is sad to change it for the strength
That heart and cheek must know at length.
Many a word of sneer and scorn
Must in their harshness have been borne,
Many a gentle feeling dead,
And all youth's sweet confiding fled,
Ere learn'd that task of shame and pride,
The tear to check, the blush to hide.

'T is midnight, and a starry shower
Weeps its bright tears o'er leaf and flower;
Sweet, silent, beautiful, the night
Sufficing for her own delight.
But other lights than sky and star
From yonder casements gleam afar;
There odorous lamps of argentine
Shed that sweet ray, half shade, half shine,

Soft as it were but beauty's smile
That lit her favourite bower the while.
Back from each open lattice flew
The curtains, like swoll'n waves of blue
Star-dropt with silvery broidery rare;
And every motion seem'd to bear
A message from the grove beneath,—
Each message was a rose's breath.
A thousand flowers were round the room,
All with their gifts of scent and bloom;
And at the far end of the hall
Like music came a lulling fall
Of waters; at the midnight time
Play'd from the fount a liquid chime,
As 't were the honey-dews of sleep
'Lighting, each lid in rest to steep.

Leant on a silken couch, which caught
The airs with fragrant rose-breath fraught,
Lay the young queen. As if oppress'd
With its rich weight, her purple vest
Was doff'd, as if with it were laid
Aside cares, pomp, and vain parade.
While, like a cloud in the moonlight,
Floated her graceful robe of white.
Just stirred enough the scented air
To lift the sunny wreaths of hair,
And bear the tresses from the ground,
Which the attendant maids unbound.
A cheerful meeting wont to be
That evening hour's tranquillity.
There with the young, the frank, the gay,
Irene would be glad as they,

Blithe prisoner 'scaping form and state,
Her nature warring with her fate.
Glad, but yet tender, gentle, meek,
Her fairy hand was all too weak
For regal sceptre; never meant
To rule more than the music sent
From a light lute, whose gentle tone
Was as an echo to her own.

But bent and sadden'd is her gaze,
Her heart is gone to other days;
When summer buds around her hair
Were all the crown she had to wear,
And they were twined by him who now
Grasp'd fierce at that upon her brow;
Her playmate and her early friend.
And thus can young affection end!

And thus can proud ambition part
The kindliest ties around the heart!
And like the desert springs that dry
To dust beneath the parching sky,
All too soon waste the sweet revealing
Of youth's fresh flow of generous feeling.

Morn came, but with it tidings came
Half timid joy, half crimson shame.
Oh! the rose is a tell-tale flower,
And watching looks were on the hour,
On the red blush, the drooping eye,
The queen wore as the prince pass'd by.
Policy read the thoughts within,
Ending where love could but begin.

Why might not TANCRED share her seat?
They lead the rebel to her feet.
Sage counsellor and noble peer
Spared maiden blush and maiden fear.
Yielding, yet tremulous the while,
Her sole reply one downcast smile;
While order'd they the moon that night
Should rise upon the nuptial rite.
Ill might the youthful maiden brook
To fix on his her timid look.
She only felt his lip had press'd
Her white hand, and hope told the rest.
Companion of her infancy,
Less than her friend how could he be?
She did not mark the haughty glare
Which even now his look could wear;

The lip of pride as if disdain'd
The fond heart which yet his remain'd;
As scorn'd the empire of the land
That must be shared with woman's hand.

The moon upon the bridal shone,
Treachery, — Prince TANCRED — he is gone!
Confusion marr'd the fair array;
An armed band are on their way,
The rebel banner is display'd,
And thus is trusting faith repaid.
IRENE flung her marriage veil
Aside, her cheek was deadly pale.
But, save that, nothing might declare
That love or grief were struggling there.
Wondering they gazed on their young queen,
So firm her step, so proud her mien.

Promptly the city was prepared,
Summon'd to arms the royal guard
Were bade their strength and bearing show
To awe, but not attack the foe
Till further orders. Last of all
She call'd her council to the hall.
She enter'd; it was strange to see
How soon such utter change could be.
Pale as if lip and cheek had grown
Sudden to monumental stone,
So fix'd, that, but the lighted eye
Show'd it had yet to close and die,
It was like the last sleep of death,
When hue, warmth, light, have pass'd with breath.
Hurriedly had been thrown aside
The silver robes that deck'd the bride;

A night-black garb around her swept:
Drear contrast! for her hair yet kept
Amid its wealth of sunny curls
The bridal snowy braid of pearls.
She paused not, though her breath seem'd given
But as the last to waft to heaven,
And on the vacant throne laid down
The dove-topp'd wand of rule and crown.
From many never pass'd away
That sweet voice to their dying day.

"My hand is all too weak to bear
A sceptre which the sword must share.
To my bold kinsman I resign
All sway and sovereignty of mine;
Bear him the sceptre of the land,
No longer fetter'd by that hand."

Rose the red blush, her accents fell,
Scarce might they hear her low farewell.

When as she turn'd to leave the hall,
Rose kindly murmurs of recall;
The crown was hers, and many a brand
Now waited only her command.
One word, one look, on them she cast,
"Your queen's request, her first, her last."

Silence as deep as in the grave,
To the new king his homage gave;
Arose no shout to greet his name,
To him no word of welcome came,
But pass'd he solemnly and sad
To palace halls no longer glad.

Nought was there or of shout or song,
That bear young monarch's praise along;
Many there were that bent the knee,
But many bent it silently.

They led him to a stately room,
Yet with somewhat of nameless gloom;
Flowers were there, but wither'd all;
Music, but with a dying fall;
Maidens, but each with veiled face,
TANCRED gazed round, he knew the place;
'Twas here his interview had been
With her its young and radiant queen.
There was her couch; was she there yet?
He started back: the brow was set
In its last mould; that marble cheek,
Fair as if death were loth to break

Its spell of beauty; the fixed lid,
As if the daylight were forbid
To brighten the blue orbs that kept
Their azure even while they slept
All other sleeps, save this dark one.
And this the work that he had done.

And she was gone, the faithful,—fair,
In her first moment of life's care;
Gone in her bloom, as if the earth
Felt pity for its loveliest birth,
And took her like the gentle flower,
That falls before the earliest shower;
With heart too tender, and too weak,—
What had such heart to do but break?

Sudden and harsh the harp-strings rung,
As rough the hand now over them flung;
Loud as a warning, omen-like, drear,
Sank the deep tones on each listener's ear,
'T was a Palmer, that seem'd from the Holy Land,
That now sway'd the harp with his stern right hand;
None around could discover his name,
Nor tell whence that pilgrim minstrel came.

THE PILGRIM'S TALE.

I have gone east, I have gone west,
To seek for what I cannot find;
A heart at peace with its own thoughts,
A quiet and contented mind.

I have sought high, I have sought low,
Alike my search has been in vain;
The same lip mix'd the smile and sigh,
The same hour mingled joy and pain.
And first I sought 'mid sceptred kings;
Power was, so peace might be, with them:
They cast a look of weariness
Upon the care-lined diadem.
I ask'd the soldier; and he spoke
Of a dear quiet home afar,
And whisper'd of the vanity,
The ruin, and the wrong of war.
I saw the merchant 'mid his wealth;
Peace surely would with plenty be:
But no! his thoughts were all abroad
With their frail ventures on the sea.

I heard a lute's soft music float
In summer sweetness on the air;
But the poet's brow was worn and wan,—
I saw peace was not written there.
And then I number'd o'er the ills,
That wait upon our mortal scene;
No marvel peace was not with them,
The marvel were if it had been.
First, childhood comes with all to learn,
And, even more than all, to bear
Restraint, reproof, and punishment,
And pleasures seen but not to share.
Youth, like the Scriptures' madman, next,
Scattering around the burning coal;
With hasty deeds and misused gifts,
That leave their ashes on the soul.

Then manhood wearied, wasted, worn,
With hopes destroy'd and feelings dead;
And worldly caution, worldly wants,
Coldness, and carelessness instead.
Then age at last, dark, sullen, drear,
The breaking of a worn-out wave;
Letting us know that life has been
But the rough passage to the grave.
Thus we go on; hopes change to fears
Like fairy gold that turns to clay,
And pleasure darkens into pain,
And time is measured by decay.
First our fresh feelings are our wealth,
They pass, and leave a void behind;
Then comes ambition, with its wars,
That stir but to pollute the mind.

We loathe the present, and we dread
To think on what to come may be;
We look back on the past, and trace
A thousand wrecks, a troubled sea.
I have been over many lands,
And each and all I found the same;
Hope in its borrow'd plumes, and care
Madden'd and mask'd in pleasure's name.
I have no tale of knightly deed:
Why should I tell of guilt and death,
Of plains deep dyed in human blood,
Of fame which lies in mortal breath.
I have no tale of lady love,
Begun and ended in a sigh,
The wilful folly nursed in smiles
Though born in bitterness to die.

I have a tale from Eastern lands,
The same shall be my song to-day;
It tells the vanity of life, —
Apply its lesson as ye may.

THE EASTERN KING:

THE PILGRIM'S TALE.

He flung back the chaplet, he threw down the wine
"Young monarch, what sorrow or care can be thine?
There are gems in thy palace, each one like a star
That shines in the bosom of twilight afar;
Thy goblets are mantling in purple and light,
The maidens around thee like morning are bright,
Ten kingdoms bow down at the sound of thy name,
The lands of far countries have heard of thy fame,

The wealth of the earth, and the spoils of the seas,
Are thine; oh, young monarch, what ail'st thou,
with these?"

"I'm weary, I'm weary. Oh! pleasure is pain
When its spell has been broken again and again.
I am weary of smiles that are bought and are sold,
I am weary of beauty whose fetters are gold,
I am weary of wealth—what makes it of me
But that which the basest and lowest might be?
I have drain'd the red wine-cup, and what found I
there?
A beginning of madness, no ending of care!
I am weary of each, I am weary of all,
Listless my revel, and lonely my hall.
Breathe not the song, for its sweetness is flown;
Fling not these flowers at the foot of my throne;

Veil, maidens, veil your warm cheeks of the rose,
Ye are slaves of my sceptre, I reck not of those!"

The monarch rose up with the reddening of morn,
He rose to the music of trumpet and horn;
His banner is spread to the sun and the wind,
In thousands the plain by his warriors is lined.
The foot ranks go first, their bows in their hand,
In multitudes gathering like waves on the strand;
Behind ride his horsemen, as onwards they come,
Each proud steed is covering his bridle with foam.
In the midst is the king: there is pride on his brow,
As he looks on the myriads that follow him now;
His eye and his sabre are flashing alike,
Woe, woe for the warrior that dares him to strike!

Thousands and thousands are strewn on the ground,
AHMED comes back a conqueror, but what hath he found?
The cry of the orphan is loud on his ear,
And his eye hath beheld the young bride's bitter tear,
And the friend of his youth is left dead on the plain,
And the flower of his nobles return not again.
There are crowds that are filling the air with his name;
Do ye marvel the monarch is loathing his fame?

Again to the sunshine the banners are spread;
Again rings the earth with the warriors' tread;
And loud on the wings of the morning are borne
The voice of the trumpet, the blast of the horn;

And eager to gaze on the royal array,
The people in crowds gather forth on its way.
Who would deem they were gazing on death and on doom,
That yon purple and gold strew'd the way to the tomb?
The canopy glitters; oh, vainest deceit!
There the king's robe of state is his cold winding-sheet.
And he at whose beck waited life, waited death,
He hath not command on a poor moment's breath,
A whole people trembled when that he but frown'd,
And his smile was the summer of nations around.
Now who is there watches for smile or for frown:
For the head of another is girt with his crown;
And he lieth a heap of powerless clay,
Where the meanest earth-worm at his pleasure may prey.

They bore the monarch on to his tomb,
Black marble suiting such dwelling of gloom:
But on it was graven a lesson sublime,
A voice from the grave appealing to time;
Were not voice from the living or dead alike
On the heart in its foolish pride to strike.

"Millions bow'd down at the foot of my throne;
The strength of the north and the south were my own;
I had treasures pour'd forth like the waves of the sea;
Success seem'd the slave of my sceptre to be.
And pleasures in crowds at my least bidding came,
Every wish that the will in its wildness could frame:
And yet, amid all that fell to my share,
How much was weariness, how much was care!

I numbered years of pain and distress,
And but fourteen days of happiness.
Mortal, nor pleasure, nor wealth, nor power,
Are more than the toys of a passing hour;
Earth's flowers bear the foul taint of earth,
Lassitude, sorrow, are theirs by their birth.
One only pleasure will last, to fulfil,
With some shadow of good, the Holy One's will.
The only steadfast hope to us given,
Is the one which looks in its trust to heaven."

THERE was silence around the stately hall,
For that song laid the spell of its darkness o'er all;
Some thought of their hopes now low in the tomb;
Others of hopes that were but in their bloom,

And trembled to think how frail, if how fair,
Earth's pleasures in beauty and being are;
Others had thoughts they feared to name,
As that pilgrim could read each heart in its shame:
But word or sign gave he to none,
And away like a shadow in silence hath gone.
Rose the Countess, and left her throne,
Signal it was that the meeting was done,
And spoke her summons, and graceful led
To where the sumptuous board was spread.

Evening came, and found its hours
Vow'd to music, mirth, and flowers.
Wide ten gorgeous halls were flung,
Each with purple tapestry hung;
With wreaths, whose roses were as bright
As in the first morning light;

Mirrors like the glassy plain,
Where the beauty beam'd again;
Pictures whose Italian grace
Show'd inspiration's finest trace,
To whose winged moods were given
Moment's visionings of heaven;
And, more than all together fair,
Beauty's living soul was there.

Follow'd by those who pleasaunce took
In converse light and curious look,
The Countess led where leaf and flower
Made one small hall an Eastern bower.
The blush acacia seem'd to keep
Watch o'er the rose's purple sleep;
And tulips, like the wine-cups stored
Round a monarch's festal board;

And the roof above, as art
Vied with nature's loveliest part,
Was so curiously inlaid,
That there another garden play'd.
No lamps amid the foliage hung,
But silver smiles the moonbeams flung;
And radiance from each distant room
Lighted the flowers' and ladies' bloom.
A harp was there. The haunt was one,
Where, many a summer noon, alone,
Clemenza lent time music's wings;
And, dreaming o'er the mournful strings,
Learn'd other lessons than those taught
By pride, and wealth, and worldly thought.
Said the band round that it were shame,
Such hour should pass unhymn'd away;

And many a fair lip smiled its claim,
As echo sweet to minstrel lay.
Pray'd they the Countess that her hand
Should first assume the harp's command.
She paused, then said that she would wake
One, for that nameless poet's sake;
One song snatch'd from oblivion's wave,
Like the lone lily on his grave.

SONG.

My heart is like the failing hearth
Now by my side,
One by one its bursts of flame
Have burnt and died.
There are none to watch the sinking blaze,
And none to care,
Or if it kindle into strength,
Or waste in air.

My fate is as yon faded wreath
Of summer flowers;
They 've spent their store of fragrant health
On sunny hours,
Which reck'd them not, which heeded not
When they were dead:
Other flowers, unwarn'd by them,
Will spring instead.
And my own heart is as the lute
I now am waking;
Wound to too fine and high a pitch
They both are breaking.
And of their song what memory
Will stay behind?
An echo, like a passing thought,
Upon the wind.

Silence, forgetfulness, and rust,
Lute, are for thee:
And such my lot; neglect, the grave,
These are for me.

"Now take the harp, EULALIA mine,
For thy sad song;" and at the sign
Came forth a maiden. She was fair
And young; yet thus can spring-time wear
The traces of far other hour
Than should be on such gentle flower.
Her eyes were downcast, as to keep
Their secret, for they shamed to weep;
Her cheek was pale, but that was lost,
So often the bright blushes cross'd;

And seem'd her mouth so sweet the while,
As if its nature were to smile;
Her very birthright hope,—but earth
Keeps not the promise of its birth.
'T was whisper'd that young maiden's breast
Had harbour'd wild and dangerous guest;
Love had been there,—in that is said
All that of doom the heart can dread.
Oh! born of Beauty in those isles
Which far 'mid Grecian seas arise,
They call'd thy mother queen of smiles,
But, Love, they only gave thee sighs.
She woke the harp: at first her touch
Seem'd as it sought some lighter strain;
But the heart breathes itself, and such
As suffer deep seek mirth in vain.

SONG.

Farewell, farewell, I'll dream no more,
'Tis misery to be dreaming;
Farewell, farewell, and I will be
At least like thee in seeming.
I will go forth to the green vale,
Where the sweet wild flowers are dwelling,
Where the leaves and the birds together sing,
And the woodland fount is welling.
Not there, not there, too much of bloom
Has spring flung o'er each blossom;
The tranquil place too much contrasts
The unrest of my bosom.
I will go to the lighted halls,
Where midnight passes fleetest;

Oh! memory there too much recalls
Of saddest and of sweetest.
I'll turn me to the gifted page
Where the bard his soul is flinging;
Too well it echoes mine own heart,
Breaking e'en while singing.
I must have rest; oh! heart of mine,
When wilt thou lose thy sorrow?
Never, till in the quiet grave;
Would I slept there to-morrow!

Rose-bud mouth, sunny brow,
Wore she who, fairy-like, sprung now
Beside the harp. Careless she hung
Over the chords; her bright hair flung

A sunshine round her. Light laugh'd she,
" All too sad are your songs for me;
Let me try if the strings will breathe
For minstrel of the aspen wreath."
Lightly the answering prelude fell,
Thus sang the Lady ISABELLE.

SONG.

WHERE do purple bubbles swim,
But upon the goblet's brim?
Drink not deep, howe'er it glow,
Sparkles never lie below.
Beautiful the light that flows
From the rich leaves of the rose;
Keep it,—then ask, where hath fled
Summer's gift of morning red?

Earth's fair are her fleeting things;
Heaven, too, lends her angels wings.
What can charms to pleasure give,
Such as being fugitive?
Thus with love: oh! never try
Further than a blush or sigh;
Blush gone with the clouds that share it,
Sigh pass'd with the winds that bear it.

But met she then young Vidal's eye,
His half sad, half reproachful sigh:
His Isabelle! and could she be
Votaress of inconstancy?
As if repentant of her words,
Blushing she bent her o'er the chords;

With fainter tones the harp then rung,
As thus, with bow'd down head, she sung.

SONG.

I have belied my woman's heart,
In my false song's deceiving words;
How could I say love would depart,
As pass the light songs of spring birds?
Vain, vain love would be
Froth upon a summer sea.

No, love was made to soothe and share
The ills that wait our mortal birth;
No, love was made to teach us where
One trace of Eden haunts our earth.
Born amid the hours of spring,
Soothing autumn's perishing.

Timid as the tale of woe,
Tender as the wood dove's sigh,
Lovely as the flowers below,
Changeless as the stars on high,
Made all chance and change to prove,
And this is a woman's love.

"Well changed, fair lady," laughing said
A girl beside, whose chestnut hair
Was wreathed with the wild vine-leaves spread,
As if that she some wood nymph were;
And darker were her brow and cheek,
And richer in their crimson break,
Than those of the fair ring beside.
In sooth, Lolotte had often tried

The influence of the wind and sun,
That loved the cheek they dwelt upon
Too well, to leave it without trace
They had known such sweet dwelling-place.
And her bright eyes seem'd as they had won
The radiance which the summer sun
Brought to her valleys lone and wild,
Where she had dwelt. And now half child,
Half woman, in the gay excess
Of all youth's morning happiness,
She came to the Lady of Isaure's towers,
As fresh and as sweet as the forest bowers
Where the gladness had pass'd of her earliest hours.
" Now hearken thee, Lady ISABELLE,
See if aright I read thy spell,
And the rule of thy charmed sway, to keep
Watch over Love's enchanted sleep."

SONG.

WHERE, oh! where's the chain to fling,
One that will bind CUPID's wing,
One that will have longer power
Than the April sun or shower?
Form it not of Eastern gold,
All to weighty it to hold;
Form it neither all of bloom,
Never does Love find a tomb
Sudden, soon, as when he meets
Death amid unchanging sweets:
But if you would fling a chain,
And not fling it all in vain,
Like a fairy form a spell
Of all that is changeable,
Take the purple tints that deck,
Meteor-like, the peacock's neck;

Take the many hues that play
On the rainbow's colour'd way;
Never let a hope appear
Without its companion fear;
Only smile to sigh, and then
Change into a smile again;
Be to-day as sad, as pale,
As minstrel with his lovelorn tale;
But to-morrow gay as all
Life had been one festival.
If a woman would secure
All that makes her reign endure,
And, alas! her reign must be
Ever most in phantasy,
Never let an envious eye
Gaze upon the heart too nigh;

Never let the veil be thrown
Quite aside, as all were known
Of delight and tenderness,
In the spirit's last recess;
And, one spell all spells above,
Never let her own her love.

But from the harp a darker song
Is sweeping like the winds along -
The night gale at that dreamy hour
When spirit and when storm have power;—
Yet sadly sweet: and can this be,
Amenaïde, the wreck of thee?
Mind, dangerous and glorious gift,
Too much thy native heaven has left

Its nature in thee. for thy light
To be content with earthly home:
It hath another, and its sight
Will too much to that other roam,—
And heavenly light and earthly clay
But ill bear with alternate sway;—
Till jarring elements create
The evil which they sought to shun,
And deeper feel their mortal state,
In struggling for a higher one.
There is no rest for the proud mind;
Conscious of its high powers confined,
Vain dreams mid its best hopes arise;
It is itself its sacrifice.
Ah! sad it is, to see the deck
Dismasted, of some noble wreck;

And sad to see the marble stone
Defaced, and with grey moss o'ergrown;
And sad to see the broken lute
For ever to its music mute!
But what is lute, or fallen tower,
Or ship sunk in its proudest hour,
To awe and mystery combined
In their worst shape — the ruin'd mind?
To her was trusted that fine power
Which rules the bard's enthusiast hour;
The human heart gave up its keys
To her, who ruled its sympathies
In song, whose influence was brought
From what first in herself had wrought
Too passionate; her least emotion
Swept like the whirlwind o'er the ocean.

Kind, tender, but too sensitive,
None seem'd her equal love to bear;
Affection's ties small joys could give,
Tried but by what she hoped they were.
Too much on all her feelings threw
The colouring of their own hue;
Too much her ardent spirit dream'd
Things would be such as she had deem'd.
She trusted love, albeit her heart
Was ill made for love's happiness;
She ask'd too much, another's part
Was cold beside her own excess.
She sought for praise; her share of fame,
It went beyond her wildest claim:
But ill could her proud spirit bear
All that befals the laurel's share;—

Oh, well they gave the laurel tree
A minstrel's coronal to be!
Immortal as its changeless hue,
The deadly poison circles through,
Its venom makes its life; ah! still
Earth's lasting growths are those of ill;—
And mined was the foundation-stone,
The spirit's regal shrine o'erthrown.
Aimless and dark, the wandering mind
Yet had a beauty left behind;
A touch, a tone, a shade, the more
To tell of what had pass'd before.
She woke the harp, and backward flung
The cloud of hair, that pall-like hung
O'er her pale brow and radiant eyes,
Wild as the light of midnight skies,

When the red meteor rides the cloud,
Telling the storm has burst its shroud:
A passionate hue was on her cheek;
Untranquil colours, such as break
With crimson light the northern sky:
Yet on her wan lip seem'd to lie
A faint sweet smile, as if not yet
It could its early charm forget.
She sang, oh! well the heart might own
The magic of so dear a tone.

SONG.

I know my heart is as a grave
Where the cypress watch is keeping
Over hopes and over thoughts
In their dark silence sleeping.

Yet not the less know I that heart
Was a goal whence proud steeds started,
Though now it be a ruin'd shrine
Whose glory is departed.
For my spirit hath left her earthly home
And found a nobler dwelling,
Where the music of light is that of life,
And the starry harps are swelling.
Yet ever at the midnight hour
That spirit within me burneth,
And joy comes back on his fairy wings,
And glory to me returneth.

But a shade passed over the maiden's face;
Some darker image her thoughts retrace;
And so sadly the tones from the harp-strings swept,
'T was as for very pity they wept.

A faded flower, a broken gem,
Are emblems mine:
The flower hath lost its loveliness
With its sun-shine;
The ruby stone no more is set
On lady's brow,
Its beauty of unsullied light
Is wanting now.
Like me, no thought of former worth
From doom will save;
They will be flung to earth and air,
I to the grave.

THE lorn one with her song has pass'd,
'T was meet such song should be the last.

Now, gentle Sleep! thy honey wing,
And roses, with thy poppies bring.
Sweet and soft be thy rest to-night;
That at the call of Morning's light,
May crimson cheeks and radiant eyes,
Lovely as her own, arise.

END OF THE FIRST DAY.

THE SECOND DAY.

Sweet Spirit of delicious Song,
To whom, as of true right, belong
The myriad music notes that swell
From the poet's breathing shell;
We name thy name, and the heart springs
Up to the lip, as if with wings,
As if thy very mention brought
Snatches of inspired thought.

Is it war? At once are borne
Words like notes of martial horn
Is it love? Comes some sweet tale
Like that of the nightingale.
Is it Nature's lovely face?
Rise lines touch'd with her own grace.

Is it some bright garden scene?
There, too, hath the minstrel been,
Linking words of charmed power
With the green leaf and the flower.
Is it woman's loveliness?
He hath revell'd to excess,
Caught all spells that can beguile
In dark eye or rosy smile.
Is it deed that hath its claim
Upon earth's most holy fame,
Or those kindly feelings sent
But for hearth and home content?
Lofty thought, or counsel sage,
Seek them in the poet's page;
Laurel, laud, and love belong
To thee, thou Spirit sweet of Song.

Not in courtly hall to-day
Meets the lady's congress gay.
'T is a bright and summer sky,—
They will bear it company;
Odours float upon the gale,
Comrades suiting minstrel tale;
Flowers are spreading, carpet meet
For the beauty's fairy feet.
Shame to stay in marble hall
Thus from nature's festival.

The garden had one fair resort,
As if devised for minstrel court:
An amphitheatre of trees
Shut from soft cheeks the ruder breeze;
While all around the chestnuts made,
With closing boughs, a pleasant shade,

Where, if a sunbeam wander'd through,
'T was like the silver fall of dew;
The middle was an open space
Of softest grass, and those small flowers,
Daisies, whose rose-touch'd leaves retrace
The gold and blush of morning's hours.

To-day the Countess had for throne
An ancient trunk with moss o'ergrown;
And at her feet, as if from air
A purple cloud had fallen there,
Grew thousand violets, whose sighs
Breathed forth an Eastern sacrifice;
And, like a canopy, o'erhead
A Provence rose luxuriant spread,
And its white flowers, pale and meek,
Seem'd sisters to the lady's cheek.

And ranged in a graceful order round,
A fairy court upon fairy ground,
Group'd the bright band; and, like a tent,
Leaves and bloom over all were blent,
Flinging bright colours, but changing fast,
As ever the varying sunbeams pass'd;
And in the midst grew a myrtle tree,
There was the minstrel's place to be,
And its buds were delicate, frail, and fair,
As the hopes and joys of his own heart are.

Dark was the brow, and the bearing proud,
Of the bard who first stept forth from the crowd;
A small cloak down from his shoulder hung,
And a light guitar o'er his arm was slung;
Many a lady's casement had known
The moonlight spell of its magic tone:

But the fire of youth from his cheek had pass'd,
And its hopes and its dreams had faded as fast;
The romance of his earlier time was over,
The warrior had half forgotten the lover;
And the light grew dark in his radiant eyes,
As he told his tale of high emprize.

THE YOUNG AVENGER:

THE SPANISH MINSTREL'S TALE.

THE warrior's strength is bow'd by age, the warrior's step is slow,
And the beard upon his breast is white as is the winter snow;

Yet his eye shines bright, as if not yet its last of fame were won;
Six sons stand ready in their arms to do as he has done.

"Now take your way, ye LARAS bold, and to the battle ride;
For loud upon the Christian air, are vaunts of Moorish pride:
Your six white steeds stand at the gate; go forth, and let me see
Who will return the first and bring a Moslem head to me."

Forth they went, six gallant knights, all mail'd from head to heel;
Is it not death to him who first their fiery strength shall feel?

They spurr'd their steeds, and on they dash'd, as
sweeps the midnight wind;
While their youngest brother stood and wept that
he must stay behind.

"Come here, my child," the father said, "and
wherefore dost thou weep?
The time will come when from the fray nought shall
my favourite keep;
When thou wilt be the first of all amid the hostile
spears."
The boy shook back his raven hair, and laugh'd
amid his tears.

The sun went down, but lance nor shield reflected
back his light;
The moon rose up, but not a sound broke on the rest
of night.

The old man watch'd impatiently, till with morn o'er the plain
There came a sound of horses' feet, there came a martial train.

But gleam'd not back the sunbeam glad from plume or helm of gold,
No, it shone upon the crimson vest, the turban's emerald fold.
A Moorish herald; six pale heads hung at his saddle-bow,
Gash'd, changed, yet well the father knew the lines of each fair brow.

"Oh! did they fall by numbers, or did they basely yield?"
"Not so; beneath the same bold hand thy children press'd the field.

They died as NOURREDDIN would wish all foes of his should die;
Small honour does the conquest boast when won from those who fly.

"And thus he saith, 'This was the sword that swept down thy brave band,
Find thou one who can draw it forth in all thy Christian land.'
If from a youth such sorrowing and scathe thou hast endured,
Dread thou to wait for vengeance till his summers are matured."

The aged chieftain took the sword, in vain his hand essay'd
To draw it from its scabbard forth, or poise the heavy blade;

He flung it to his only child, now sadly standing by.
"Now weep, for here is cause for tears; alas! mine
own are dry."

Then answer'd proud the noble boy, "My tears
last morning came
For weakness of my own right hand; to shed them
now were shame:
I will not do my brothers' names such deep and
deadly wrong;
Brave were they unto death, success can but to
God belong."

And years have fled, that boy has sprung unto a
goodly height,
And fleet of foot and stout of arm in his old father's
light;

Yet breathed he never wish to take in glorious strife his part,
And shame and grief his backwardness was to that father's heart.

Cold, silent, stern, he let time pass, until he rush'd one day,
Where mourning o'er his waste of youth the weary chieftain lay.
Unarm'd he was, but in his grasp he bore a heavy brand,
"My father, I can wield his sword; now knighthood at thine hand.

"For years no hour of quiet sleep upon my eyelids came,
For NOURREDDIN had poison'd all my slumber with his fame.

I have waited for my vengeance; but now, alive
or dead,
I swear to thee by my brothers' graves that thou
shalt have his head."

It was a glorious sight to see, when those two
warriors met:
The one dark as a thunder-cloud, in strength and
manhood set;
The other young and beautiful, with lithe and
graceful form,
But terrible as is the flash that rushes through the
storm.

And eye to eye, and hand to hand, in deadly strife
they stood,
And smoked the ground whereon they fought, hot
with their mingled blood;

Till droop'd the valiant infidel, fainter his blows and few,
While fiercer from the combat still the youthful Christian grew.

NOURREDDIN falls, his sever'd head, it is young LARA's prize:
But dizzily the field of death floats in the victor's eyes.
His cheek is as his foeman's pale, his white lips gasp for breath:
Ay, this was all he ask'd of Heaven, the victory and death.

He raised him on his arm, "My page, come thou and do my will;
Canst thou not see a turban'd band upon yon distant hill?

Now strip me of my armour, boy, by yonder river's
side,
Place firm this head upon my breast, and fling me
on the tide."

That river wash'd his natal halls, its waters bore
him on,
Till the moonlight on the hero in his father's pre-
sence shone.
The old chief to the body drew, his gallant boy was
dead,
But his vow of vengeance had been kept, he bore
NOURREDDIN'S head.

'T was sad to gaze on the wan brow
Of him who now awoke the lute,
As one last song life must allow,
Then would those tuneful lips be mute.
His cheek was worn, what was the care
Had writ such early lesson there?
Was it Love, blighted in its hour
Of earliest and truest power
By worldly chills which ever fling
Their check and damp on young Love's wing;
Or unrequited, while the heart
Could not from its fond worship part?
Or was it but the wasting woe
Which every human path must know;
Or hopes, like birds, sent forth in vain,
And seeking not their ark again;

Friends in their very love unjust,
Or faithless to our utmost trust;
Or fortune's gifts, to win so hard;
Or fame, that is its own reward
Or has no other, and is worn
Mid envy, falsehood, hate, and scorn?

All these ills had that young bard known,
And they had laid his funeral stone.
Slowly and sad the numbers pass'd,
As thus the minstrel sung his last.

THE ROSE:

THE ITALIAN MINSTREL'S TALE.

The Count Gonfali held a feast that night,
And colour'd lamps sent forth their odorous light

Over gold carvings and the purple fall
Of tapestry; and around each stately hall
Were statues, pale and finely shaped and fair,
As if all beauty save her life were there;
And, like light clouds floating around each room,
The censers roll'd their volumes of perfume;
And scented waters mingled with the breath
Of flowers, which died as if they joy'd in death;
And the white vases, white as mountain snow,
Look'd yet more delicate in the rich glow
Of summer blossoms hanging o'er each side,
Like sunset reddening o'er a silver tide.
There was the tulip with its rainbow globe;
And, like the broidery on a silken robe
Made for the beauty's festal midnight hours,
The sparkling jessamine shook its silver showers;

Like timid hopes the lily shrank from sight;
The rose leant as it languish'd with delight,
Yet, bride-like, drooping in its crimson shame;
And the anemone, whose cheek of flame
Is golden, as it were the flower the sun
In his noon-hour most loved to look upon.

At first the pillar'd halls were still and lone,
As if some fairy palace all unknown
To mortal eye or step. This was not long;
Waken'd the lutes, and swell'd a burst of song,
And the vast mirrors glitter'd with the crowd
Of changing shapes. The young, the fair, the proud
Came thronging in; and the gay cavalier
Took some fair flower from the fairest near,
And gave it to the dark-eyed beauty's hand,
To mark his partner for the saraband;

And graceful steps pass'd on, whose tender tread
Was as the rose-leaf in the autumn shed;
And witching words, raising on the young cheek
Blushes that had no need of words to speak.
Many were lovely there; but, of that many,
Was one who shone the loveliest of any,
The young Olympia. On her face the dyes
Were yet warm with the dance's exercise,
The laugh upon her full red lip yet hung,
And, arrow-like, flash'd light words from her tongue.
She had more loveliness than beauty: hers
Was that enchantment which the heart confers;
A mouth sweet from its smiles, a glancing eye,
Which had o'er all expression mastery;
Laughing its orb, but the long dark lash made
Somewhat of sadness with its twilight shade,

And suiting well the upcast look which seem'd
At times as it of melancholy dream'd;
Her cheek was as a rainbow, it so changed,
As each emotion o'er its surface ranged;
And every word had its companion blush,
But evanescent as the crimson flush
That tints the daybreak; and her step was light
As the gale passing o'er the leaves at night;
In truth those snow feet were too like the wind,
Too slight to leave a single trace behind.
She lean'd against a pillar, and one hand
Smooth'd back the curls that had escaped the band
Of wreathed red roses,—soft and fitting chain
In bondage such bright prisoners to retain.
The other was from the white marble known
But by the clasping of its emerald zone:

And lighted up her brow, and flash'd her eye,
As many that were wandering careless by
Caught but a sound, and paused to hear what more
Her lip might utter of its honey store.
She had that sparkling wit which is like light,
Making all things touch'd with its radiance bright;
And a sweet voice whose words would chain all round,
Although they had no other charm than sound.
And many named her name, and each with praise;
Some with her passionate beauty fill'd their gaze,
Some mark'd her graceful step, and others spoke
Of the so many hearts that own'd the yoke
Of her bewildering smile; meantime, her own
Seem'd as that it no other love had known

Than its sweet loves of nature, music, song,
Which as by right to woman's world belong,
And make it lovely for Love's dwelling-place.
Alas, that he should leave his fiery trace!
But this bright creature's brow seem'd all too fair,
Too gay, for Love to be a dweller there;
For Love brings sorrow: yet you might descry
A troubled flashing in that brilliant eye,
A troubled colour on that varying cheek,
A hurry in the tremulous lip to speak
Avoidance of sad topics, as to shun
Somewhat the spirit dared not rest upon;
An unquiet feverishness, a change of place,
A pretty pettishness, if on her face
A look dwelt as in scrutiny to seek
What hidden meanings from its change might break.

One gazed with silent homage, one who caught
Her every breath, and blush, and look, and thought;
One whose step mingled not with the gay crowd
That circled round her as of right allow'd,
But one who stood aloof with that lone pride
Which ever to deep passion is allied.
Half scorning, yet half envying the gay ring
That gather'd round with gentle blandishing,
He stood aloof; and cold and stern and high,
Looked as he mock'd at their idolatry:
Yet long'd his knee to bend before the shrine
Of the sweet image his heart own'd divine;
While, half in anger that she had not known
What even to himself he would not own.
He knew not how a woman's heart will keep
The mystery of itself, and like the deep

Will shine beneath the sunbeam, flash and flow
O'er the rich bark that perishes below.
She felt he gazed upon her, and her cheek
Wore added beauty in its crimson break;
And softer smiles were on her lip, like those
The summer moonlight sheds upon the rose;
And her eye sparkled, like the wine-cup's brim,
Mantling in light, though it turn'd not to him.
Again the dancers gather'd; from them one
Took gaily her fair hand, and they are gone.
Leoni follow'd not, yet as they pass'd
How could Olympia's light step be the last?
Yet pass'd she quickly by him, and the haste
From her wreathed hair one fragrant rose displaced.
Leoni saw it fall; he is alone,
And he may make the fairy gift his own.

He took the flower, and to his lip 't was press'd,
One moment, and 't is safe within his breast;
But while he linger'd dreaming o'er its bloom,
Olympia's step again is in the room
With the young cavalier, who urged her way,
And said her rose beside the column lay,
For there he miss'd it, and some flattering word
Fill'd up the whisper which he only heard.
Leoni flung it down in carelessness,
As he had mark'd them not, and held it less
From knowledge of his act than vacant thought,
While the mind on some other subject wrought.
In haste he left them both, but he could hear
The pleading of the gallant cavalier
For that rose as a gift. He might not tell
What answer from the maiden's lip then fell,

But when they met again he mark'd her hair
Where it had wreathed,—the rose-bud was not there.
They pass'd and repass'd: he, cold, silently,
As was his wont; but she, with flashing eye,
And blush lit up to crimson, seem'd to wear
More than accustom'd gladness in her air.
Ah! the heart overacts its part; its mirth,
Like light, will all too often take its birth
Mid darkness and decay; those smiles that press,
Like the gay crowd round, are not happiness;
For peace broods quiet on her dove-like wings,
And this false gaiety a radiance flings,
Dazzling but hiding not; and some who dwelt
Upon her meteor beauty, sadness felt;
Its very brilliance spoke the fever'd breast;
Thus glitter not the waters when at rest.

The scene is changed, the maiden is alone
To brood upon Hope's temple overthrown;
The hue has left her lip, the light her eye,
And she has flung her down as if to die.
Back from her forehead was the rich hair swept,
Which yet its festal braid of roses kept.
She was in solitude: the silent room
Was in the summer's sweet and shadowy gloom;
The sole light from the oratory came,
Where a small lamp set forth its scented flame
Beneath the Virgin's picture; but the wind
Stole from the casement, for the jasmine twined,
With its luxuriant boughs, too thickly grew,
To let the few dim star-beams wander through.
In her hand was a rose; she held the flower
As if her eye were spell-bound by its power.

It was spell-bound; coldly that flower repress'd
Sweet hopes,—ay, hopes, albeit unconfess'd.
Check'd, vainly check'd, the bitter grief recurs —
That rose flung down because that rose was hers!
And at the thought paleness in blushes fled,
Had he, then, read her heart, and scorn'd when read?
Oh! better perish, than endure that thought.
She started from her couch; when her eye caught
The Virgin's picture. Seem'd it that she took
Part in her votary's suffering; the look
Spoke mild reproof, touch'd with grave tenderness,
Pitying her grief, yet blaming her excess.
Olympia turn'd away, she might not bear
To meet such holy brow, such placid air,
At least not yet; for she must teach her breast
A lesson of submission, if not rest,

And still each throbbing pulse, ere she might kneel
And pray for peace she had not sought to feel.

She sought the casement, lured by the soft light
Of the young moon, now rising on the night.
The cool breeze kiss'd her, and a jasmine spray
Caught in her tresses, as to woo her stay.
And there were sights and sounds that well might fling
A charmed trance on deepest suffering.
For stood the palace close on the sea shore;
Not like those northern ones, where breakers roar,
And rugged rocks and barren sands are blent,—
At once both desolate and magnificent;
But here the beach had turf and trees that grew
Down to the water-side, and made its blue

Mirror for their dark shapes. Is nought so fair
But must there come somewhat of shadow there?
Whate'er thou touchest there must be some shade,
Fair earth, such destiny for thee is made.

It was a night to gaze upon the sea,
Marvel, and envy its tranquillity;
It was a night to gaze upon the earth,
And feel mankind were not her favourite birth;
It was a night to gaze upon the sky,
Pine for its loveliness, and pray to die.
Olympia felt the hour; from her cheek fled
Passion's untranquil rose, she bow'd her head:
For the thick tears like hasty childhood's came;
She hid her face, for tears are shed with shame.
Her heart had spent its tempest, like the cloud
When summer rain bursts from its stormy shroud;

Pale, sad, but calm, she turn'd, and bent the knee,
In meekest prayer, Madonna fair, to thee.
Where might the maiden's soul, thus crush'd and riven,
Turn from its mortal darkness, but to Heaven?
It is in vain to say that love is not
The life and colour of a woman's lot.
It is her strength; for what, like love's caress,
Will guard and guide her own weak tenderness?
It is her pride, fleeting and false the while,
To see her master suing for her smile.
Calls it not all her best affections forth,—
Pure faith, devotedness, whose fruitless worth
Is all too little felt? O! man has power
Of head and hand,—heart is a woman's dower.

Youth, beauty, rank, and wealth, all these combined,—
Can these be wretched? Mystery of the mind!
Whose happiness is in itself, but still
Has not that happiness at its own will.

And she was wretched; she, the young, the fair,
The good, the kind, bow'd down in her despair.
Ay, bitterest of the bitter, this worst pain,—
To know love's offering has been in vain;
Rejected, scorn'd, and trampled under foot,
Its bloom and leaves destroy'd, not so its root.
"He loves me not,"—no other word or sound
An echo in Olympia's bosom found.
She thought on many a look, and many a tone,
From which she gather'd hope,—now these were gone,

Life were too burthensome, save that it led
To death; and peace, at least was with the dead.
One pang remain'd: perchance, though unconfess'd,
Some secret hope yet linger'd in her breast;
But this, too, was destroy'd. She learn'd next morn
Sea winds and waters had LEONI borne
Afar to other lands; and she had now
But only to her hapless fate to bow.

She changed, she faded, she the young, the gay,
Like the first rose Spring yields to pale decay.
Still her lip wore the sweetness of a smile,
But it forgot its gaiety the while.
Her voice had ever a low gentle tone,
But now 't was tremulous as Sorrow's own;
Her step fell softer as it were subdued
To suit its motion to her alter'd mood;

As if her every movement, gesture, look,
Their bearing from the spirit's sadness took;
And yet there was no word which told that grief
Prey'd on the heart as blight preys on the leaf.
But meeker tenderness to those around,
A soothing, sharing love, as if she found
Her happiness in theirs; more mild, more kind,
As if a holier rule were on her mind.
I cannot choose but marvel at the way
In which our lives pass on from day to day
Learning strange lessons in the human heart,
And yet like shadows letting them depart.
Is misery so familiar that we bring
Ourselves to view it as a usual thing?
Thus is it; how regardless pass we by
The cheek to paleness worn, the heavy eye!

We do too little feel each other's pain;
We do relax too much the social chain
That binds us to each other; slight the care
There is for grief in which we have no share.

Olympia felt all this; it loosed one more
Of her heart's ties, and earth's illusions wore
The aspect of their truth,—a gloomy show,
But what it well befits the soul to know.
It taught the lesson of how vain the toil
To build our hopes upon earth's fragile soil.
O! only those who suffer, those may know
How much of piety will spring from woe.

Days, weeks, and months pass'd onwards, and once more
Leoni stood upon his native shore.

Slight change there was in him: perchance his brow
Wore somewhat of more settled shadow now;
Somewhat of inward grief, too, though repress'd,
Was in his scornful speech and bitter jest;
For misery, like a masquer, mocks at all
In which it has no part, or one of gall.
I will say that he loved her, but say not
That his, like hers, was an all blighted lot;
For ever in man's bosom will man's pride
An equal empire with his love divide.

It was one glorious sunset, lone and mute,
Save a young page who sometimes waked his lute
With snatches of sad song; LEONI paced
His stately hall, and much might there be traced
What were the workings of its owner's mind.
Red wine was in a silver vase enshrined,

But rudely down the cup was flung, undrain'd,
So hastily, the leaf below was stain'd;
For many an open'd volume lay beside,
As each for solace had in vain been tried:
And now, worn, wearied, with his solitude,
He strode, half sad, half listless in his mood,
Listening the lute or the deep ocean wave,
When an attendant enter'd in and gave
A packet to his hand. Careless he gazed,
And broke the seal. Why! the red flush has raised
Its passion to his brow—what! is the name
There written?—from OLYMPIA, then, it came.

"One word, LEONI, 'tis my first and last,
And never spoken but that life is past.
It is earth's lingering dreaming, that I pine
To know these lines will meet one look of thine;

If possible upon thy heart to fling
One gentle memory, one soft thought to cling
To thy more mournful hours; to bid thee take
A pledge too dearly treasured for thy sake,
And one of mine. Ah! this may be forgiven;
'T is the last weakness of the bride of Heaven,
Which I shall be or e'er this comes to tell
How much thou hast been loved. Farewell, farewell!"

He took her gift: well known the pledges there,
A wither'd rose, a tress of silken hair.

Sunny and blue was the minstrel's eye,
Like the lake when noontide is passing by;
And his hair fell down in its golden rings,
As bright and as soft as his own harp-strings,

Yet with somewhat wild upon lip and cheek,
As forth the enthusiast spirit would break
To wander at times through earth and air,
And feed upon all the wonders there.
A changeful prelude his light notes rung,
As remembering all they had ever sung.
Now the deep numbers rolled along,
Like the fiery sweep of a battle song;
Now sad, yet bold, as those numbers gave
Their last farewell to the victor's grave;
Then was it soft and low, as it brought
The depths of the maiden's lovelorn thought:—
Harp of Erin! hath song a tone
Not to thy gifted numbers known?—
But the latest touch was light and calm,
As the voice of a hymn, the night-falling balm;

Holy and sweet, as its music were given
Less from a vision of earth than of heaven.

THE HAUNTED LAKE:

THE IRISH MINSTREL'S LEGEND.

Rose up the young moon; back she flung
The veil of clouds that o'er her hung:
Thus would fair maiden fling aside
Her bright curls in their golden pride;
On pass'd she through the sky of blue,
Lovelier as she pass'd it grew;
At last her gentle smiles awake
The silence of the azure lake.
Lighted to silver, waves arise,
As conscious of her radiant eyes.

Hark! floats around its music's tone,
Sweeter than mortal ear hath known:
Such, when the sighing night-wind grieves
Amid the rose's ruby leaves,
Conscious the nightingale is nigh,
That too soon his reluctant wing
Must rival song and rival sigh
To his own fair flower bring;
Such as the lute, touch'd by no hand
Save by an angel's, wakes and weeps;
Such is the sound that now to land
From the charmed water sweeps.
Around the snowy foam-wreaths break,
The spirit band are on the lake.
First, a gay train form'd of the hues
Of morning skies and morning dews:

A saffron-light around them play'd,
As eve's last cloud with them delay'd;
Such tints, when gazing from afar,
The dazed eye sees in midnight star.
They scatter'd flowers, and the stream
  Grew like a garden, each small billow
Shining with the crimson gleam
  The young rose flung upon its pillow;
And from their hands, and from their hair,
Blossoms and odours fill'd the air;
And some of them bore wreathed shells,
Blush-dyed, from their coral cells,
Whence the gale at twilight brought
The earliest lesson music caught:
And gave they now the sweetest tone,
That unto the sea-born lyre was known;

For they were echoes to the song
That from spirit lips was fleeting,
And the wind bears no charm along
Such as the shell and voices meeting.
On pass'd they to the lulling tune,
Meet pageant for the lady moon.
A louder sweep the music gave:
The chieftain of the charmed wave,
Graceful upon his steed of snow,
Rises from his blue halls below;
And rode he like a victor-knight
Thrice glorious in his arms of light.
But, oh! the look his features bear
Was not what living warriors wear;
The glory of his piercing eye
Was not that of mortality;

Earth's cares may not such calm allow,
Man's toil is written on his brow:
But here the face was passionless,
The holy peace of happiness,
With that grave pity spirits feel
In watching over human weal;
An awful beauty round him shone
But for the good to look upon.
Close by his side a maiden rode,
Like spray her white robe round her flow'd;
No rainbow hues about her clung,
Such as the other maidens flung;
And her hair hath no summer crown,
But its long tresses floating down
Are like a veil of gold which cast
A sunshine to each wave that past.

She was not like the rest: her cheek
Was pale and pure as moonlight snows;
Her lip had only the faint streak
The bee loves in the early rose;
And her dark eye had not the blue
The others had, clear, wild, and bright;
But floating starry, as it drew
Its likeness from the radiant night.
And more she drew my raised eye
Than the bright shadows passing by;
A meeker air, a gentler smile,
A timid tenderness the while,
Held sympathy of heart, and told
The lady was of earthly mould.
Blush'd the first blush of coming day,
Faded the fairy band away.

They pass'd, and only left behind
A lingering fragrance on the wind,
And on the lake their haunted home,
One long white wreath of silver foam.
Heard I in each surrounding vale
What was that mortal maiden's tale:
Last of her race, a lonely flower,
She dwelt within their ruin'd tower.
Orphan without one link to bind
Nature's affection to her kind;
She grew up a neglected child,
As pure, as beautiful, as wild
As the field flowers which were for years
Her only comrades and compeers.
Time pass'd, and she, to woman grown,
Still, like a wood bird, dwelt alone.

Save that, beside a peasant's hearth,
Tales of the race which gave her birth
Would sometimes win the maiden's ear;
And once, in a worst hour of fear,
When the red fever raged around,
Her place beside the couch was found
Of sickness, and her patient care,
And soothing look, and holy prayer,
And skill in herbs, had power sublime
Upon the sufferer's weary time:
But, saving these, her winter day
Was pass'd within the ruins gray;
And ever summer noons were spent
Beside the charmed lake, and there
Her voice its silver sweetness sent
To mingle with the air.

Thus time pass'd on, At length, one day
Beside her favourite haunt she lay,
When rush'd some band who wish'd to make
Her prisoner for her beauty's sake.

She saw them ere they gain'd her seat.
Ah! safety may she gain?
Though mountain deer be not more fleet,
Yet here flight is in vain.
The lake—oh, it is there to save!
She plunges—is it to a grave?
Moons waned; again is come the night
When sprites are free for earthly sight.
They see the mortal maiden ride
In honour by the chieftain's side,
So beautiful, so free from sin,
Worthy was she such boon to win:

The spirit race that floated round
Were not more pure more stainless found;
Her utmost loveliness and grace
Were sole signs of her human race;
Happy, thus freed from earthly thrall,
She skims the lake, fairest of all.

Scarlet robe 'broider'd with gold;
A turban's snowy, but gem-set fold,
And its heron plume fasten'd by diamond clasp;
Rubies red on his dagger-hasp;
Eyes dark as a midnight dream,
Yet flashing wild with starry beam;
Swarthy cheek untouch'd by red,
Told far had Clemenza's summons sped:

Since the Moorish bard had brought his claim,
Mid these Northern halls, to the meed of fame.

THE WREATH:

TALE OF THE MOORISH BARD.

The earliest beauty of the rose,
Waking from moonlight repose,
In morning air and dew to steep
The blush of her voluptuous sleep;
This was her cheek: and for her eye,
Gaze thou upon the midnight sky,
And choose its fairest star, the one
Thou deem'st most lovely and most lone:
Her lip, oh! never flower of spring
Had smile of such sweet blandishing.

Ay, beautiful she was as light
Descending on the darken'd sight;
But these were not the spells that gave
Leila the heart for her charmed slave;
But all those sweetest gifts that win,
Like sunshine, instant entrance in;
Those gentle words and acts that bind
In love our nature with our kind.

She dwelt within a palace fair,
Such as in fairy gardens are;
There grew her father's cypress-tree,
No other monument had he.
He bade that never funeral stone
Should tell of glory overthrown,—
What could it say, but foreign sky
Had seen the exile pine and die?

The maiden grew beside the tomb;
Perhaps 'twas that which touch'd her bloom
With somewhat of more mournful shade
Than seems for youth's first budding made.
It was her favourite haunt, she felt
As there her all of memory dwelt.
Alone, a stranger in the land
Which was her home, the only band
Between her and her native tongue
Was when her native songs she sung.

Leila, thou wert not of our name;
Thy Christian creed, thy Spanish race,
To us were sorrow, guilt, and shame,
No earthly beauty might efface.
Yet, lovely Infidel, thou art
A treasure clinging to my heart:

A very boy, I yet recall
The dark light of thine eye's charm'd thrall;
Beneath thy worshipp'd cypress leant,
And flowers with thy breathing blent,
Less pure, less beautiful than thou,
I see thee; and I hear thee now
Singing sweet to the twilight dim—
Could it be sin?—thy vesper-hymn.

Burnt a sweet light in that fair shrine,
At once too earthly, too divine;
The heart's vain struggle to create
An Eden not for mortal state.

Love, who shall say that thou art not
The dearest blessing of our lot?

Yet, not the less, who may deny
Life has no sorrow like thy sigh?
A fairy gift, and none may know
Or will it work to weal or woe.

Spite of the differing race and creed,
Their fathers had been friends in need;
And, all unconsciously at first,
Love in its infancy was nursed;
Companions from their earliest years,
Unknown the hopes, the doubts, the fears,
That haunt young passion's early hour,
Spared but to come with deadlier power,
With deeper sorrow, worse unrest,
When once love stood in both confest.

The ground she trod, the air she breathed,
The blossoms in her dark hair wreathed,
Her smile, her voice, to MIRZA's eyes
More precious seem'd than Paradise.

Yet was the silence sweet unbroken
By vows in which young love is spoken.
But when the heart has but one dream
For midnight gloom or noontide beam,
And one, at least, knows well what power
Is ruling, words will find their hour;
Though after growth of grief and pain,
May wish those words unsaid again.

'T was sunset, and the glorious heaven
To LEILA's cheek and eye seem'd given;

The one like evening crimson bright,
The other fill'd with such clear light,
That, as she bent her o'er the strings,
Catching music's wanderings,
Look'd she well some Peri fair,
Born and being of the air.
Waked the guitar beneath her hand
To ballad of her Spanish land;
Sad, but yet suiting twilight pale,
When surely tenderest thoughts prevail.

SONG.

Maiden, fling from thy braided hair
The red rose-bud that is wreathed there;
For he who planted the parent tree
Is now what soon that blossom will be.

Maiden, fling from thy neck of snow
The chain where the Eastern rubies glow;
For he who gave thee that jewell'd chain
Lies in his wounds on the battle-plain.

Maiden, fling thou aside thy lute,
Be its chords, as thy own hopes, mute;
For he who first taught thy lips that strain
Never will listen its music again.

Give those roses to strew on his grave,
That chain for a mass for the soul of the brave,
And teach that lute, thou widow'd dove,
A dirge for the fall of thy warrior love.

"Alas! that ever," Leila said,
"The fond should mourn above the dead,

Thus all too early desolate,
Without one hope or wish from fate;
Save death, what can the maiden crave
Who weeps above her lover's grave?"
Darken'd her eyes with tearful dew,
Wore her soft cheek yet softer hue;
And MIRZA who had lean'd the while,
Feeding upon her voice and smile,
Felt as if all that fate could bring
Were written on that moment's wing.
One moment he is at her knee,
"So, LEILA, wouldst thou weep for me?"
Started she, as at lightning gleam,—
"Oh, MIRZA, this I did not dream.
Moslem and Moor, may Spanish maid
Hearken such words as thou hast said?

Was like an earth-flame's sudden breath,
Sprung from the ruin'd soil beneath.

They had not met, since to the maid
His first rash vow of love was said;
But heard we, how by penance, prayer,
She strove to wash away the sin,
That ever Infidel had share
A Christian maiden's breast within;
And there perchance were other tears
Than those which flow'd from holy fears.
I know not what vain dream had sprung
In Mirza. Is it that despair,
Ere the last veil aside is flung,
Unable its own words to bear,
Will borrow from hope's charmed tongue?

To her a wreath he bid me take,
Such as in our fair garden wake
Love's hopes and fears,— oh! suiting well
Such gentle messages to tell.
That wreath I to the lady brought.
I found her in the hall alone,
So changed, your sculptors never wrought
A form in monumental stone
So cold, so pale. The large dark eye
Shone strangely o'er the marble cheek;
The lips were parted, yet no sigh
Seem'd there of breathing life to speak;
The picture at whose feet she knelt,
The Maiden Mother and her Child,
The hues which on that canvass dwelt,
With more of human likeness smiled.

Awful the face, however fair,
When death's dark call is written there.
I gave the wreath, I named his name,
One moment the heart's weakness came,
Written in crimson on her brow,
The very blossoms caught the glow;
Or grew they bright but from the fall
Of tears that lit their coronal?
The next, the dark eye's sudden rain,
The cheek's red colour pass'd again,
All earthly feelings with them died;
Slowly she laid the gift aside.
When will my soul forget the look
With which one single stem she took
From out the wreath?—a tulip flower;
But, touch'd as by some withering power,

The painted leaves were drooping round
The rich but burning heart they bound.
She spoke,—oh! never music's tone
Hath sadder, sweeter cadence known:—
"With jarring creed, and hostile line,
And heart with fate at enmity,
This wasting flower is emblem mine,
'Tis faded, it hath but to die."

I took those leaves of faded bloom
To MIRZA; 'twas of both the doom.
He died the first of the battle line,
When red blood dims the sabre's shine;
He died the early death of the brave,
And the place of the battle was that of his grave.
She died as dies a breath of song
Borne on the winds of evening along;

She fell as falls the rose in spring,
The fairest are ever most perishing.
Yet lingers that tale of sorrow and love,
Of the Christian maid and her Moslem love;
A tale to be told in the twilight hour,
For the beauty's tears in her lonely bower.

Rose the last minstrel; he was one
Well the eye loves to look upon.
Slight but tall, the gallant knight
Had the martial step he had used in fight;
Dark and rich curl'd the auburn hair
O'er a brow, like the ocean by moonlight, fair;
His island colour was on his cheek,
Enough of youth in its health to speak;

But shaded it was with manly brown,
From much of toil and of peril known:
Frank was his courtesy, and sweet
The smile he wore at fair lady's feet;
Yet haughty his step, and his mien was high,
Half softness, half fire his falcon eye.
England, fair England, hath earth or sea,
Land of hearth and home, aught to liken with thee!

SIR WALTER MANNY AT HIS FATHER'S TOMB:

THE ENGLISH KNIGHT'S BALLAD.

"O! show me the grave where my father is laid,
Show his lowly grave to me;
A hundred pieces of broad red gold,
Old man, shall thy guerdon be."

With torch in hand, and bared head,
The old man led the way;
And cold and shrill pass'd the midnight wind
Through his hair of silvery grey.

A stately knight follow'd his steps,
And his form was tall and proud;
But his step fell soft, and his helm was off,
And his head on his bosom bow'd.

They pass'd through the cathedral aisles,
Whose sculptured walls declare
The deeds of many a noble knight;
De Manny's name was not there.

They pass'd next a low and humble church,
Scarce seen amid the gloom;

There was many a grave, yet not even there
Had his father found a tomb.

They traversed a bleak and barren heath,
Till they came to a gloomy wood,
Where the dark trees droop'd, and the dark grass grew,
As cursed with the sight of blood.

There stood a lorn and blasted tree,
As heaven and earth were its foes,
And beneath was a piled-up mound of stones,
Whence a rude grey cross arose.

"And lo!" said the ancient servitor,
"It is here thy father is laid;

No mass has bless'd the lowly grave
Which his humblest follower made.

"I would have wander'd through every land
Where his gallant name was known,
To have pray'd a mass for the soul of the dead,
And a monumental stone.

"But I knew thy father had a son,
To whom the task would be dear;
Young knight, I kept the warrior's grave
For thee, and thou art here."

Sir Walter grasp'd the old man's hand,
But spoke he never a word;—
So still it was, that the fall of tears
On his mailed vest was heard.

Oh! the heart has all too many tears;
But none are like those that wait
On the blighted love, the loneliness
Of the young orphan's fate.

He call'd to mind when for knighthood's badge
He knelt at EDWARD's throne;
How many stood by a parent's side,
But he stood there alone!

He thought how often his heart had pined,
When his was the victor's name;
Thrice desolate, strangers might give,
But could not share his fame.

Down he knelt in silent prayer,
On the grave where his father slept;

And many the tears, and bitter the thoughts,
As the warrior his vigil kept.

And he built a little chapel there;
And bade the death-bell toll,
And prayers be said, and mass be sung,
For the weal of the warrior's soul.

Years pass'd, and ever SIR WALTER was first
Where warlike deeds were done;
But who would not look for the gallant knight
In the leal and loyal son.

SOOTH to say, the sight was fair,
When the lady unbound from her raven hair

The Golden Violet. O praise!
Dear thou art to the poet's lays.
Many a flash from each dark eye pass'd,
Many a minstrel's pulse throbb'd fast,
As she held forth the flower.

The dream is past, hush'd is my lute,
At least, to my awaking, mute;
Past that fair garden and glad hall,
And she the lady queen of all.
Leave we her power to those who deign
One moment to my idle strain:
Let each one at their pleasure set
The prize—the Golden Violet.
Could I choose where it might belong,
Mid phantoms but of mine own song?

My task is ended; it may seem
But vain regret for morning dream,
To say how sad a look is cast
Over the line we know the last.
The weary hind at setting sun
Rejoices over labour done,
The hunter at the ended chase,
The ship above its anchoring-place,
The pilgrim o'er his pilgrimage,
The reader o'er the closing page;
All, for end is to them repose.
The poet's lot is not with those:
His hour in Paradise is o'er;
He stands on earth, and takes his share
Of shadows closing round him more,
The feverish hope, the freezing care;

And he must read in other eyes,
Or if his spirit's sacrifice
Shall brighten, touch'd with heaven's own fire,
Or in its ashes dark expire.
Then even worse,—what art thou, fame?
A various and doubtful claim
One grants and one denies; what none
Can wholly quite agree upon.
A dubious and uncertain path
At least the modern minstrel hath;
How may he tell, where none agree,
What may fame's actual passport be?

For me, in sooth, not mine the lute
On its own powers to rely;
But its chords with all wills to suit,
It were an easier task to try

To blend in one each varying tone
The midnight wind hath ever known.
One saith that tale of battle brand
Is all too rude for my weak hand;
Another, too much sorrow flings
In pining cadence o'er my strings.
So much to win, so much to lose,
No marvel if I fear to choose.
How can I tell of battle field,
I never listed brand to wield;
Or dark ambition's pathway try,
In truth I never look'd so high;
Or stern revenge, or hatred fell,
Of what I know not, can I tell?
I soar not on such lofty wings,
My lute has not so many strings;

Its dower is but a humble dower,
And I who call upon its aid,
My power is but a woman's power,
Of softness and of sadness made.
In all its changes my own heart
Must give the colour, have its part.
If that I know myself what keys
Yield to my hand their sympathies,
I should say it is those whose tone
Is woman's love and sorrow's own;
Such notes as float upon the gale,
When twilight, tender nurse and pale,
Brings soothing airs and silver dew
The panting roses to renew;
Feelings whose truth is all their worth,
Thoughts which have had their pensive birth

When lilies hang their heads and die,
Eve's lesson of mortality.
Such lute, and with such humble wreath
As suits frail string and trembling breath,
Such, gentle reader, woos thee now.
Oh! o'er it bend with yielding brow:
Read thou it when some soften'd mood
Is on thy hour of solitude;
And tender memory, sadden'd thought,
On the world's harsher cares have wrought.
Bethink thee, kindly look and word
Will fall like sunshine o'er each chord;
That, light as is such boon to thee,
'T is more than summer's noon to me;
That, if such meed my suit hath won,
I shall not mourn my task is done.

END OF THE GOLDEN VIOLET.

ERINNA.

INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

Among the obligations I owe to "The Brides of Florence," and to the information contained in its interesting notes, I must refer particularly for the origin of the present poem. In one of those notes is the first, indeed the only account I ever met with of Erinna. The following short quotation is sufficient for my present purpose:—"Erinna was a poetess from her cradle, and she only lived to the completion of her eighteenth year.—Of Erinna very little is known; there is in the Grecian Anthology a sepulchral epigram by Antipater on this young poetess." A poem of the present kind had long floated on my imagination; and this gave it a local habitation and a name. There seemed to me just enough known of Erinna to interest; and I have not attempted to write a classical fiction; feelings are what I wish to narrate, not incidents: my aim has been to draw the portrait and trace the changes of a highly poetical mind, too sensitive perhaps of the chill and bitterness belonging even to success. The feelings which constitute poetry are the same in all ages, they are acted upon by similar causes. Erinna is an ideal not a historical picture, and as such I submit it less to the judgment than to the kindness of my friends.

ERINNA.

Was she of spirit race, or was she one
Of earth's least earthly daughters, one to whom
A gift of loveliness and soul is given,
Only to make them wretched?

There is an antique gem, on which her brow
Retains its graven beauty even now.
Her hair is braided, but one curl behind
Floats as enamour'd of the summer wind;
The rest is simple. Is she not too fair
Even to think of maiden's sweetest care?
The mouth and brow are contrasts. One so fraught
With pride, the melancholy pride of thought
Conscious of power, and yet forced to know
How little way such power as that can go;
Regretting, while too proud of the fine mind,
Which raises but to part it from its kind:
But the sweet mouth had nothing of all this;
It was a mouth the rose had lean'd to kiss

For her young sister, telling, now though mute,
How soft an echo it was to the lute.
The one spoke genius, in its high revealing,
The other smiled a woman's gentle feeling.
It was a lovely face: the Greek outline
Flowing, yet delicate and feminine;
The glorious lightning of the kindled eye,
Raised, as it communed with its native sky.
A lovely face, the spirit's fitting shrine;
The one almost, the other quite divine.

My hand is on the lyre which never more
With its sweet commerce, like a bosom friend,
Will share the deeper thoughts which I could trust
Only to music and to solitude.
It is the very grove, the olive grove,
Where first I laid my laurel crown aside,
And bathed my fever'd brow in the cold stream;
As if that I could wash away the fire

Which from that moment kindled in my heart.
I well remember how I flung myself,
Like a young goddess, on a purple cloud
Of light and odour—the rich violets
Were so ethereal in bloom and breath:
And I,—I felt immortal, for my brain
Was drunk and mad with its first draught of fame.
'T is strange there was one only cypress tree,
And then, as now, I lay beneath its shade.
The night had seen me pace my lonely room,
Clasping the lyre I had no heart to wake,
Impatient for the day: yet its first dawn
Came cold as death; for every pulse sank down,
Until the very presence of my hope
Became to me a fear. The sun rose up;
I stood alone mid thousands: but I felt

Mine inspiration; and, as the last sweep
Of my song died away amid the hills,
My heart reverberate the shout which bore
To the blue mountains and the distant heaven
Erinna's name, and on my bended knee,
Olympus, I received thy laurel crown.

And twice new birth of violets have sprung,
Since they were first my pillow, since I sought
In the deep silence of the olive grove
The dreamy happiness which solitude
Brings to the soul o'erfill'd with its delight:
For I was like some young and sudden heir
Of a rich palace heap'd with gems and gold,
Whose pleasure doubles as he sums his wealth
And forms a thousand plans of festival;

Such were my myriad visions of delight.
The lute, which hitherto in Delphian shades
Had been my twilight's solitary joy,
Would henceforth be a sweet and breathing bond
Between me and my kind. Orphan unloved,
I had been lonely from my childhood's hour,
Childhood whose very happiness is love:
But that was over now; my lyre would be
My own heart's true interpreter, and those
To whom my song was dear, would they not bless
The hand that waken'd it? I should be loved
For the so gentle sake of those soft chords
Which mingled others' feelings with mine own.

Vow'd I that song to meek and gentle thoughts.
To tales that told of sorrow and of love,

To all our nature's finest touches, all
That wakens sympathy: and I should be
Alone no longer; every wind that bore,
And every lip that breathed one strain of mine,
Henceforth partake in all my joy and grief.
Oh! glorious is the gifted poet's lot,
And touching more than glorious: 'tis to be
Companion of the heart's least earthly hour;
The voice of love and sadness, calling forth
Tears from their silent fountain: 'tis to have
Share in all nature's loveliness; giving flowers
A life as sweet, more lasting than their own;
And catching from green wood and lofty pine
Language mysterious as musical;
Making the thoughts, which else had only been
Like colours on the morning's earliest hour,

Immortal, and worth immortality;
Yielding the hero that eternal name
For which he fought; making the patriot's deed
A stirring record for long after time;
Cherishing tender thoughts, which else had pass'd
Away like tears; and saving the loved dead
From death's worst part—its deep forgetfulness.

From the first moment when a falling leaf,
Or opening bud, or streak of rose-touch'd sky,
Waken'd in me the flush and flow of song,
I gave my soul entire unto the gift
I deem'd mine own, direct from heaven; it was
The hope, the bliss, the energy of life:
I had no hope that dwelt not with my lyre,
No bliss whose being grew not from my lyre,

No energy undevoted to my lyre.
It was my other self that had a power;
Mine, but o'er which I had not a control.
At times it was not with me, and I felt
A wonder how it ever had been mine:
And then a word, a look of loveliness,
A tone of music, call'd it into life;
And song came gushing, like the natural tears,
To check whose current does not rest with us.

Had I lived ever in the savage woods,
Or in some distant island, which the sea
With wind and wave guards in deep loneliness;
Had my eye never on the beauty dwelt
Of human face, and my ear never drank
The music of a human voice; I feel

My spirit would have pour'd itself in song,
Have learn'd a language from the rustling leaves,
The singing of the birds, and of the tide.
Perchance, then, happy had I never known
Another thought could be attach'd to song
Than of its own delight. Oh! let me pause
Over this earlier period, when my heart
Mingled its being with its pleasures, fill'd
With rich enthusiasm, which once flung
Its purple colouring o'er all things of earth,
And without which our utmost power of thought
But sharpens arrows that will drink our blood.
Like woman's soothing influence o'er man,
Enthusiasm is upon the mind;
Softening and beautifying that which is
Too harsh and sullen in itself. How much

I loved the painter's glorious art, which forms
A world like, but more beautiful than this;
Just catching nature in her happiest mood!
How drank I in fine poetry, which makes
The hearing passionate, fill'd with memories
Which steal from out the past like rays from clouds!
And then the sweet songs of my native vale,
Whose sweetness and whose softness call'd to mind
The perfume of the flowers, the purity
Of the blue sky; oh, how they stirr'd my soul!—
Amid the many golden gifts which heaven
Has left, like portions of its light, on earth,
None hath such influence as music hath.
The painter's hues stand visible before us
In power and beauty; we can trace the thoughts

Which are the workings of the poet's mind:
But music is a mystery, and viewless
Even when present, and is less man's act,
And less within his order; for the hand
That can call forth the tones, yet cannot tell
Whither they go, or if they live or die,
When floated once beyond his feeble ear;
And then, as if it were an unreal thing,
The wind will sweep from the neglected strings
As rich a swell as ever minstrel drew.

A poet's word, a painter's touch, will reach
The innermost recesses of the heart,
Making the pulses throb in unison
With joy or grief, which we can analyse;
There is the cause for pleasure and for pain:

But music moves us, and we know not why;
We feel the tears, but cannot trace their source.
Is it the language of some other state,
Born of its memory? For what can wake
The soul's strong instinct of another world,
Like music? Well with sadness doth it suit,
To hear the melancholy sounds decay,
And think (for thoughts are life's great human links,
And mingle with our feelings,) even so
Will the heart's wildest pulses sink to rest.

How have I loved, when the red evening fill'd
Our temple with its glory, first, to gaze
On the strange contrast of the crimson air,
Lighted as if with passion, and flung back,
From silver vase and tripod rich with gems,

To the pale statues round, where human life
Was not, but beauty was, which seemed to have
Apart existence from humanity:
Then, to go forth where the tall waving pines
Seem'd as behind them roll'd a golden sea
Immortal and eternal; and the boughs,
That darkly swept between me and its light,
Were fitting emblems of the worldly cares
That are the boundary between us and heaven;
Meanwhile, the wind, a wilful messenger
Lingering amid the flowers on his way,
At intervals swept past in melody,
The lutes and voices of the choral hymn
Contending with the rose-breath on his wing!
Perhaps it is these pleasures chiefest charm,
They are so indefinable, so vague.

From earliest childhood all too well aware
Of the uncertain nature of our joys,
It is delicious to enjoy, yet know
No after consequence will be to weep.
Pride misers with enjoyment, when we have
Delight in things that are but of the mind:
But half humility when we partake
Pleasures that are half wants, the spirit pines
And struggles in its fetters, and disdains
The low base clay to which it is allied.
But here our rapture raises us: we feel
What glorious power is given to man, and find
Our nature's nobleness and attributes,
Whose heaven is intellect; and we are proud
To think how we can love those things of earth
Which are least earthly; and the soul grows pure
In this high communing, and more divine.

This time of dreaming happiness pass'd by,
Another spirit was within my heart;
I drank the maddening cup of praise, which grew
Henceforth the fountain of my life; I lived
Only in others' breath; a word, a look,
Were of all influence on my destiny:
If praise they spoke, 'twas sunlight to my soul;
Or censure, it was like the scorpion's sting.

And a yet darker lesson was to learn—
The hollowness of each: that praise, which is
But base exchange of flattery; that blame,
Given by cautious coldness, which still deems
'Tis safest to depress; that mockery,
Flinging shafts but to show its own keen aim;
That carelessness, whose very censure's chance;

And, worst of all, the earthly judgment pass'd
By minds whose native clay is unredeem'd
By aught of heaven, whose every thought falls foul
Plague spot on beauty which they cannot feel,
Tainting all that it touches with itself.
O dream of fame, what hast thou been to me
But the destroyer of life's calm content!
I feel so more than ever, that thy sway
Is weaken'd over me. Once I could find
A deep and dangerous delight in thee;
But that is gone. I am too much awake.
Light has burst o'er me, but not morning's light
'Tis such light as will burst upon the tomb,
When all but judgment 's over. Can it be,
That these fine impulses, these lofty thoughts,
Burning with their own beauty, are but given

To make me the low slave of vanity,
Heartless and humbled? O my own sweet power,
Surely thy songs were made for more than this!
What a worst waste of feeling and of life
Have been the imprints on my roll of time,
Too much, too long! To what use have I turn'd
The golden gifts in which I pride myself?
They are profaned; with their pure ore I made
A temple resting only on the breath
Of heedless worshippers. Alas! that ever
Praise should have been what it has been to me —
The opiate of my heart. Yet I have dream'd
Of things which cannot be; the bright, the pure,
That all of which the heart may only dream;
And I have mused upon my gift of song,
And deeply felt its beauty, and disdain'd

The pettiness of praise to which at times
My soul has bow'd; and I have scorn'd myself
For that my cheek could burn, my pulses beat
At idle words. And yet, it is in vain
For the full heart to press back every throb
Wholly upon itself. Ay, fair as are
The visions of a poet's solitude,
There must be something more for happiness;
They seek communion. It had seem'd to me
A miser's selfishness, had I not sought
To share with others those impassion'd thoughts,
Like light, or hope, or love, in their effects.
When I have watch'd the stars write on the sky
In characters of light, have seen the moon
Come like a veiled priestess from the east,
While, like a hymn, the wind swell'd on mine ear,

Telling soft tidings of eve's thousand flowers,
Has it not been the transport of my lute
To find its best delight in sympathy?
Alas! the idols which our hopes set up,
They are Chaldean ones, half gold, half clay;
We trust, we are deceived, we hope, we fear,
Alike without foundation; day by day
Some new illusion is destroyed, and life
Gets cold and colder on towards its close.
Just like the years which make it, some are check'd
By sudden blights in spring; some are dried up
By fiery summers; others waste away
In calm monotony of quiet skies,
And peradventure these may be the best:
They know no hurricanes, no floods that sweep
As a God's vengeance were upon each wave;

But then they have no ruby fruits, no flowers
Shining in purple, and no lighted mines
Of gold and diamond. Which is the best,—
Beauty and glory, in a southern clime,
Mingled with thunder, tempest; or the calm
Of skies that scarcely change, which, at the least,
If much of shine they have not, have no storms?
I know not: but I know fair earth or sky
Are self-consuming in their loveliness,
And the too radiant sun and fertile soil
In their luxuriance run themselves to waste,
And the green valley and the silver stream
Become a sandy desert. O! the mind,
Too vivid in its lighted energies,
May read its fate in sunny Araby.
How lives its beauty in each Eastern tale,

Its growth of spices, and its groves of balm!
They are exhausted; and what is it now?
A wild and burning wilderness. Alas!
For such similitude. Too much this is
The fate of this world's loveliest and best.

Is there not a far people, who possess
Mysterious oracles of olden time,
Who say that this earth labours with a curse,
That it is fallen from its first estate,
And is now but the shade of what it was?
I do believe the tale. I feel its truth
In my vain aspirations, in the dreams
That are revealings of another world,
More pure, more perfect than our weary one,
Where day is darkness to the starry soul.

O heart of mine! my once sweet paradise
Of love and hope! how changed thou art to me!
I cannot count thy changes: thou hast lost
Interest in the once idols of thy being;
They have departed, even as if wings
Had borne away their morning; they have left
Weariness, turning pleasure into pain,
And too sure knowledge of their hollowness.

And that too is gone from me; that which was
My solitude's delight! I can no more
Make real existence of a shadowy world.
Time was, the poet's song, the ancient tale,
Were to me fountains of deep happiness,
For they grew visible in my lonely hours,
As things in which I had a deed and part;

Their actual presence had not been more true:
But these are bubbling sparkles, that are found
But at the spring's first source. Ah! years may
bring
The mind to its perfection, but no more
Will those young visions live in their own light;
Life's troubles stir life's waters all too much,
Passions chase fancies, and though still we dream,
The colouring is from reality.

Farewell, my lyre! thou hast not been to me
All I once hoped. What is the gift of mind,
But as a barrier to so much that makes
Our life endurable,—companionship,
Mingling affection, calm and gentle peace,
Till the vex'd spirit seals with discontent

A league of sorrow and of vanity,
Built on a future which will never be!

And yet I would resign the praise that now
Makes my cheek crimson, and my pulses beat,
Could I but deem that when my hand is cold,
And my lip passionless, my songs would be
Number'd mid the young poet's first delights;
Read by the dark-eyed maiden in an hour
Of moonlight, till her cheek shone with its tears;
And murmur'd by the lover when his suit
Calls upon poetry to breathe of love.
I do not hope a sunshine burst of fame,
My lyre asks but a wreath of fragile flowers.
I have told passionate tales of breaking hearts,
Of young cheeks fading even before the rose;

My songs have been the mournful history
Of woman's tenderness and woman's tears;
I have touch'd but the spirit's gentlest chords,—
Surely the fittest for my maiden hand;—
And in their truth my immortality.

Thou lovely and lone star, whose silver light,
Like music o'er the waters, steals along
The soften'd atmosphere; pale star, to thee
I dedicate the lyre, whose influence
I would have sink upon the heart like thine.

In such an hour as this, the bosom turns
Back to its early feelings; man forgets
His stern ambition and his worldly cares,
And woman loathes the petty vanities

That mar her nature's beauty; like the dew,
Shedding its sweetness o'er the sleeping flowers
Till all their morning freshness is revived,
Kindly affections, sad, but yet sweet thoughts
Melt the cold eyes, long, long unused to weep.
O lute of mine, that I shall wake no more!
Such tearful music linger on thy strings,
Consecrate unto sorrow and to love;
Thy truth, thy tenderness, be all thy fame!

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

THE CONISTON CURSE:

A YORKSHIRE LEGEND.

There is a tradition of such a curse attached to one of the old mansions of the north of England; I am not aware of any cause for the malediction. This will, I trust, be sufficient excuse for placing its origin in a period when such a circumstance was most likely to have taken place; when enough of superstition remained for terror to have produced its fulfilment.

They knelt upon the altar steps, but other looks were there
Than the calm and inward looks which suit the evening hour of prayer;
Many a cheek was deadly pale, while some were flush'd with red,
And hurriedly and falteringly the holy words were said.

They knelt their last, they sang their last; for deep
the king hath sworn,
The silent cells should strangely change before the
coming morn:
The cloister'd votary henceforth is free from vow
or veil,
Her grey robes she may doff, and give her bright
hair to the gale.

And pardon be to them, if some, in their first hour
of bloom,
Thought all too lightly in their hearts 't was not so
hard a doom;
For they were young, and they were fair, and little
in their shade
Knew they of what harsh elements the jarring
world was made.

There knelt one young, there knelt one fair, but, unlike those around,
No change upon her steady mien or on her brow was found,
Save haughtier even than its wont now seem'd that lady's face,
And never yet was brow more proud among her haughty race.

Betroth'd to one who fell in war, the last of all her name,
In her first youth and loveliness the noble maiden came;
Vigil and prayer, and tears perchance, had worn her bloom away,
When held that youthful prioress in St. Edith's shrine her sway.

She gave her broad lands to its use, she gave her
golden dower,—
Marvel ye that ill she brook'd the chance that ruled
the hour?
And it may be more fiercely grew her pious zeal
allied
To this her all of earthly power—her all of earthly
pride.

Comes from the aisle a heavy sound, such steps as
tread in steel,
The clash of sword, the ring of shield, the tramp
of armed heel.
The prioress bade her nuns upraise the vesper's
sacred tone,
She led the hymn, but mute the rest—no voice
rose but her own:

For open now the gates were flung, in pour'd the soldier train,
And shout and shriek, and oath and prayer, rang through the holy fane.
Then forth the prioress stepp'd, and raised the red cross in her hand—
No warrior of her race e'er held more fearless battle brand.

"Now turn, Sir John De Coniston, I bid thee turn and flee,
Nor wait till Heaven, by my sworn lips, lay its dread curse on thee!
Turn back, Sir John De Coniston, turn from our sainted shrine,
And years of penance may efface this godless deed of thine."

Rough was Sir John De Coniston, and hasty in
his mood,
And, soldier-like, then answer'd he, in angry speech
and rude:
"I would not back although my path were lined
with hostile swords,
And deem'st thou I will turn aside for only woman's
words?"

She raised her voice, the curse was pass'd; and to
their dying day
The sound, like thunder in their ears, will never
pass away;
Still haunted them those flashing eyes, that brow
of funeral stone.
When the words were said, she veil'd her face—
the prioress was gone.

No more in that calm sanctuary its vestal maids abide,
Save one, Sir John De Coniston, and that one is thy bride;
The sister band to other homes at will might wander free,
And their lonely prioress had fled a pilgrim o'er the sea.

Seven years St. Edith's votary had wander'd far and near,
Barefoot and fasting, she has call'd on every saint to hear:
Seven years of joy and festival have pass'd away like hours,
Since that priory had changed its state to a baron's lordly towers.

There was revelling in that stately hall, and in his seat of pride
The Lord of Coniston was placed, with his lady by his side;
And four fair children there were ranged beside their parents' knee,
All glad and beautiful—a sight for weary eyes to see.

Rang the old turrets with the pledge—"Now health to thee and thine;
And long and prosperous may thy name last in thy gallant line!"
When a voice rose up above them all, and that voice was strange and shrill,
Like autumn's wind when it has caught winter's first shriek and chill;

And forth a veiled figure stepp'd, but back she flung her veil,
And they knew St. Edith's prioress by her brow so deadly pale;
No sickly paleness of the cheek whence health and hope have fled,
But that deadly hue, so wan, so cold, which only suits the dead.

"The prey of the ungodly is taken by God's hand—
I lay the endless curse of change upon this doomed land:
They may come and possession take, even as thou hast done,
But the father never, never shall transmit it to his son.

"Yet I grieve for the fair branches, though of such evil tree;
But the weird is laid, and the curse is said, and it rests on thine and thee."
Away she pass'd, though many thought to stay her in the hall,
She glided from them, and not one had heard her footstep fall.

And one by one those children in their earliest youth declined,
Like sickening flowers that fade and fall before the blighting wind;
And their mother she too pined away, stricken by the same blast,
Till Sir John De Coniston was left, the lonely and the last.

He sat one evening in his hall, still pride was on his brow,
And the fierce spirit lingering there nor time nor grief could bow;
Yet something that told failing strength was now upon his face,
When entered that dark prioress, and fronted him in place.

"Sir John, thy days are numbered, and never more we meet
Till we yield our last dread reckoning before God's judgment-seat!
My words they are the latest sounds thine ear shall ever take—
Then hear me curse again the land which is cursed for thy sake.

"Oh, Coniston! thy lands are broad, thy stately
towers are fair,
Yet woe and desolation are for aye the tenants there;
For Death shall be thy keeper, and two of the
same race
Shall ne'er succeed each other in thy fatal dwelling-
place!"

The curse is on it to this day: now others hold the
land;
But be they childless, or begirt with a fair infant
band,
Some sudden death, some wasting ill, some sickness
taints the air,
And touches all,—no master yet has ever left an
heir.

THE OMEN.

"Oh! how we miss the young and bright,
With her feet of wind, her eyes of light,
Her fragrant hair like the sunny sea
On the perfumed shores of Araby,
Her gay step light as the snow-white deer,
And her voice of song! oh! we miss her here.
There is something sad in the lighted hall;
Without her can there be festival!
There is something drear in the meteor dance,
When we do not catch her laughing glance.

But pledge we her health." Each one took up,
In that ancient hall, the red wine-cup:
Each started back from the turbid wine—
What could have dimm'd its purple shine?
Each turn'd for his neighbour's look to express
The augury himself dared not to guess.

Swept the vaulted roof along,
A sound like the echo of distant song,
When the words are lost, but you know they tell
Of sorrow's coming and hope's farewell.
Such sad music could only bear
Tale and tidings of long despair.
Pass'd the sound from the ancient hall;
You heard in the distance its 'plaining fall,
Till it died away on the chill night-wind:
But it left its fear and its sadness behind;

And each one went to his pillow that night
To hear fearful sound, and see nameless sight;
Not such dreams as visit the bower
Of the gay at the close of the festal hour.

But next morning rose: 't was a cheerful time;
For the sunshine seem'd like the summer prime,
While the bright laurel leaves round the casements spread,
And the holly with berries of shining red,
The heaven of blue, and the earth of green,
Seem'd not as if the winter had been.
Welcomed they in the Christmas morn,
With the sound of the carol, the voice of the horn.
There was white snow lay on the distant hill,
The murmuring river was cold and still;

But their songs were so glad that they miss'd not its tune,
And the hearth-fire was bright as an August noon.
As if youth came back with the joyous strain,
The aged lord welcomed in the train
Of guest and vassal; for glad seem'd he
To make and to share their festivity.

Though he may not see his EDITH's brow,
Though far away be his fair child now,
Over the sea, and over the strand,
In the sunny vales of Italian land,
He may reckon now the days to spring,
When her native birds and she will take wing,
Blithe and beautiful, glad to come
With the earliest flowers to their own dear home.

Pass a short space of dark cold days,
Of drear nights told by the pine-wood's blaze,
And the snow showers will melt into genial rain,
And the sunshine and she be back again.
And when she returns with her sweet guitar,
The song and the tale she has learn'd afar,
And caught the sweet sound to which once he clung,
The southern words of her mother's tongue,
With her soft cheek touch'd with a rosier dye,
And a clearer light in her deep dark eye,
He will not mourn that the winter hour
Has pass'd unfelt by his gentle flower.
It is Christmas-day—'t is her natal morn,
Away be all thoughts of sorrowing borne:
There is no prayer a vassal can frame
Will fail to-day, if breathed in her name;

Henceforth that guest is a bosom friend,
Whose wish a blessing for her may send.

Her picture hung in that hall, where to-day
Gather'd the guests in their festal array.
'T was a fragile shape, and a fairy face,
A cheek where the wild rose had sweet birthplace;
But all too delicate was the red,
Such rainbow hues are the soonest fled:
The sweet mouth seem'd parted with fragrant air,
A kiss and a smile were companions there:
Never was wild fawn's eye more bright,
Like the star that heralds the morning's light;
Though that trembling pensiveness it wore
Which bodes of a lustre too soon to be o'er.
But to mark these signs long gazing took;
Seem'd it at first but that your look

Dwelt on a face all glad and fair,
Mid its thousand curls of sunny hair.
They raised the cup to pledge her name;
Again that strange sad music came,
But a single strain,—loud at its close
A cry from the outer crowd arose.

All rush'd to gaze; and, winding through
The length of the castle avenue,
There was a hearse with its plumes of snow,
And its night-black horses moved heavy and slow.
One moment,—they came to the festal hall,
And bore in the coffin and velvet pall.
A name was whisper'd; the young, the fair,
Their EDITH was laid in her last sleep there.
It was her latest prayer to lie
In the churchyard beneath her native sky;

She had ask'd and pined for her early home,
She had come at last,—but how had she come!
Oh! that aged lord, how bore he this grief,
This rending off of his last green leaf?
He wasted away as the child that dies
For love of its absent mother's eyes;
Ere the spring flowers o'er her grave were weeping,
The father beside his child was sleeping.

ONE DAY.

And this the change from Morning to Midnight.

The sunshine of the morning
Is abroad upon the sky,
And glorious as that red sunshine
The crimson banners fly;
The snow-white plumes are dancing,
Flash casques and helms of gold:
'T is the gathering of earth's chivalry,
Her proud, her young, her bold.

The fiery steeds are foaming,
Sweeps by the trumpet blast,
I hear a long and pealing shout,
The soldier bands are past.

The sunshine of the morning
Is abroad upon the sea,
And mistress of the wave and wind
Yon vessel seems to be.
Like the pine-tree of the forest
Her tall mast heaven-ward springs,
Her white sails bear her onwards
Like the eagle's rushing wings.
That deck is nobly laden,
For gallant hearts are there;
What danger is they would not face,
The deed they would not dare?

The sunshine of the morning
Is abroad upon the hills,
With the singing of the green-wood leaves,
And of a thousand rills.
There springs the youthful hunter
With his winged spear and bow,
He hath the falcon's flashing eye,
The fleet foot of the roe.
He goes with a light carol,
And his own heart is as light;
On, on he bounds from rock to rock,
Rejoicing in his might.

The sunshine of the morning
Is abroad upon yon fane,
There mid his country's monuments
Dreams the young bard his strain.

Stand there on marble pedestal
The great of olden time;
Marvel ye minstrel's brow is flush'd
With thoughts and hopes sublime?

The moonshine of the midnight
Is abroad upon the plain,
Where gather'd morning's glorious ranks,
There welter now the slain.
Thousands are sunk there dying,
Pillow'd upon the dead;
The banner lies by the white plume,
But both alike are red.

The moonshine of the midnight
Is abroad upon the seas,
The waves have risen in their might
To battle with the breeze.

That ship has been the victim;
Stranded on yon bleak coast,
She has lost her mast, her winged sails,
And her deck its warlike boast.
O'er her bravest sweep the waters,
And a pale and ghastly band
Cling to the black rock's side, or pace
Like ghosts the sullen strand.

The moonshine of the midnight
Is abroad upon the hills;
No hunter's step is ringing there,
No horn the echo fills.
He is laid on a snow pillow,
Which his red heart-blood has dyed;
One false step, and the jagged rock
Enter'd the hunter's side.

The moonshine of the midnight
Is shining o'er the fane,
Where the bard awoke the morning song
He'll never wake again.
Go thou to yon lone cavern,
Where the lonely ocean sweeps
There, silent as its darkness,
A maniac vigil keeps.
'Tis the bard; his curse is on him,
His fine mind is o'erthrown,
Contempt hath jarr'd its tuneful chords,
Neglect destroy'd its tone.

These are but few from many
Of life's chequer'd scenes; yet these
Are but as all,—pride, power, hope,
Then weakness, grief, disease.

Oh, glory of the morning!
Oh, ye gifted, young, and brave!
What end have ye, but midnight;
What find ye, but the grave?

LOVE'S LAST LESSON.

Teach it me, if you can,—forgetfulness!
I surely shall forget, if you can bid me;
I who have worshipp'd thee, my god on earth,
I who have bow'd me at thy lightest word.
Your last command, "Forget me," will it not
Sink deeply down within my inmost soul?
Forget thee!—ay, forgetfulness will be
A mercy to me. By the many nights
When I have wept for that I dared not sleep,—
A dream had made me live my woes again,
Acting my wretchedness, without the hope
My foolish heart still clings to, though that hope

Is like the opiate which may lull a while,
Then wake to double torture; by the days
Pass'd in lone watching and in anxious fears,
When a breath sent the crimson to my cheek,
Like the red gushing of a sudden wound;
By all the careless looks and careless words
Which have to me been like the scorpion's stinging;
By happiness blighted, and by thee, for ever;
By thy eternal work of wretchedness;
By all my wither'd feelings, ruin'd health,
Crush'd hopes, and rifled heart, I will forget thee!
Alas! my words are vanity. Forget thee!
Thy work of wasting is too surely done.
The April shower may pass and be forgotten,
The rose fall and one fresh spring in its place,
And thus it may be with light summer love.

It was not thus with mine: it did not spring,
Like the bright colour on an evening cloud,
Into a moment's life, brief, beautiful;
Not amid lighted halls, when flatteries
Steal on the ear like dew upon the rose,
As soft, as soon dispersed, as quickly pass'd;
But you first call'd my woman's feelings forth,
And taught me love ere I had dream'd love's name.
I loved unconsciously: your name was all
That seem'd in language, and to me the world
Was only made for you; in solitude,
When passions hold their interchange together,
Your image was the shadow of my thought;
Never did slave, before his Eastern lord,
Tremble as I did when I met your eye,
And yet each look was counted as a prize;

I laid your words up in my heart like pearls
Hid in the ocean's treasure-cave. At last
I learn'd my heart's deep secret: for I hoped,
I dream'd you loved me; wonder, fear, delight,
Swept my heart like a storm; my soul, my life,
Seem'd all too little for your happiness;
Had I been mistress of the starry worlds
That light the midnight, they had all been yours,
And I had deem'd such boon but poverty.
As it was, I gave all I could—my love,
My deep, my true, my fervent, faithful love;
And now you bid me learn forgetfulness:
It is a lesson that I soon shall learn.
There is a home of quiet for the wretched,
A somewhat dark, and cold, and silent rest,
But still it is rest,—for it is the grave.

She flung aside the scroll, as it had part
In her great misery. Why should she write?
What could she write? Her woman's pride forbade
To let him look upon her heart, and see
It was an utter ruin;—and cold words,
And scorn and slight, that may repay his own,
Were as a foreign language, to whose sound
She might not frame her utterance. Down she bent
Her head upon an arm so white that tears
Seem'd but the natural melting of its snow,
Touch'd by the flush'd cheek's crimson; yet life-blood
Less wrings in shedding than such tears as those.

And this then is love's ending! It is like
The history of some fair southern clime.

Hot fires are in the bosom of the earth,
And the warm'd soil puts forth its thousand flowers,
Its fruits of gold, summer's regality,
And sleep and odours float upon the air:
At length the subterranean element
Breaks from its secret dwelling-place, and lays
All waste before it; the red lava stream
Sweeps like the pestilence; and that which was
A garden in its colours and its breath,
Fit for the princess of a fairy tale,
Is as a desert, in whose burning sands,
And ashy waters, who is there can trace
A sign, a memory of its former beauty?
It is thus with the heart; love lights it up
With hopes like young companions, and with joys
Dreaming deliciously of their sweet selves.

This is at first; but what is the result?
Hopes that lie mute in their own sullenness,
For they have quarrell'd even with themselves;
And joys indeed like birds of Paradise:
And in their stead despair coils scorpion-like
Stinging itself; and the heart, burnt and crush'd
With passion's earthquake, scorch'd and wither'd up,
Lies in its desolation,—this is love.

What is the tale that I would tell? Not one
Of strange adventure, but a common tale
Of woman's wretchedness; one to be read
Daily in many a young and blighted heart.
The lady whom I spake of rose again
From the red fever's couch, to careless eyes
Perchance the same as she had ever been.

But oh, how alter'd to herself! She felt
That bird-like pining for some gentle home
To which affection might attach itself,
That weariness which hath but outward part
In what the world calls pleasure, and that chill
Which makes life taste the bitterness of death.

And he she loved so well,—what opiate
Lull'd consciousness into its selfish sleep?—
He said he loved her not; that never vow
Or passionate pleading won her soul for him;
And that he guess'd not her deep tenderness.

Are words, then, only false? are there no looks,
Mute but most eloquent; no gentle cares
That win so much upon the fair weak things

They seem to guard? And had he not long read
Her heart's hush'd secret in the soft dark eye
Lighted at his approach, and on the cheek
Colouring all crimson at his lightest look?
This is the truth; his spirit wholly turn'd
To stern ambition's dream, to that fierce strife
Which leads to life's high places, and reck'd not
What lovely flowers might perish in his path.

And here at length is somewhat of revenge:
For man's most golden dreams of pride and power
Are vain as any woman-dreams of love;
Both end in weary brow and wither'd heart,
And the grave closes over those whose hopes
Have lain there long before.

NOTES.

Page 49.

Clairshach is the name of a small species of harp anciently used in the Highlands. See Annot Lyle's song in the "Legend of Montrose."

Page 50.

The Dream. This tale is founded on more modern tradition than that of the distant age to which my minstrel belongs: the vision, the prophecy, and ultimately death of the youthful pair are actual facts; and the present —— Campbell, Esq. Laird of Glensaddaell, *Anglicè* Melancholy Valley, is the very child whose health and prosperity have realised the prediction of his birth.

Page 130.

The Pilgrim's Tale. In one I think, of Dr. Mavor's beautiful essays (read years ago with delight), mention is made of an Eastern Monarch who, after years of power, pride, and pleasure, left it to be recorded in his archives, that in all those years he had known but fourteen days of happiness.

Page 202.

The Haunted Lake is founded on the Irish tradition of O'Donoghue, mentioned in one of Moore's charming melodies. I trust the slight liberties taken with the story will be pardoned on the plea of poetical variety.

The tulip symbol, alluded to in page 226, bears the allegorical construction of eternal separation in the beautiful language of Eastern Flowers.

Page 228.

Sir Walter Manny. The most touching incident on which this little poem is founded is a historic fact, and as such recorded in Mills's History of Chivalry; pages to which my debt of obligation and delight is more freely though now regretfully rendered, in the knowledge that it is gratitude, not flattery, which is spoken of the dead.

Page 304.

In Eastern tales, the bird of Paradise never rests on the earth.

THE END.

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